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*Sept. 1866*

# THOUGHTS

FOR

## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BY

REV. JAMES DRUMMOND.

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY J. G. HOLLAND.*

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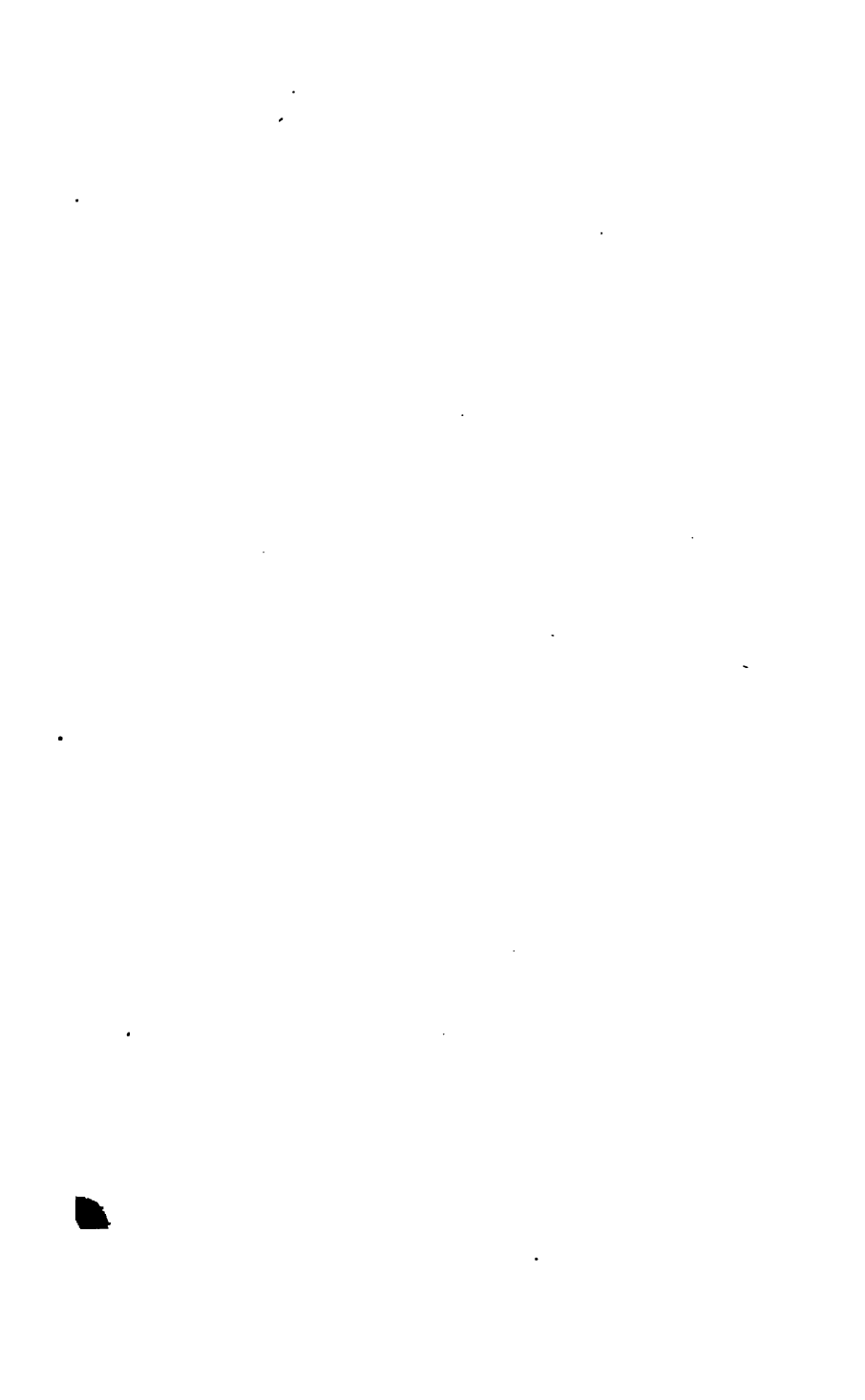


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NOT FOR  
CIRCULAR  
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TO  
THE EARLY FRIENDS OF MANY YEARS,  
AND TO  
THOSE MORE RECENTLY WON, WHOSE  
TENDER LOVE FOR THEIR PASTOR HAS NEVER WAVERED,  
THIS VOLUME IS  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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REV. JAMES DRUMMOND, the author of this volume of sermons, was my pastor during the last three years of his ministry. It is now more than two years since he passed to his reward; and it is sweet to find that memory, which so often grows faint, or proves false, keeps even wing with him in his upward flight, and presents him to me more as he is, with each day's growing glory, than as he was in the feeble days of his earthly life. It is sweet to find the frail and pain-haunted man, who was my friend, brother, teacher, and inspirer, transformed in my imagination into an angel, thrilled by heaven's sublime surprises, and plumed for its painless service. If I saw a defect in him while living, it is now effaced. If he had a quality of mind or a peculiarity of manner which seemed a discord in the heavenly tune his life was singing, I have forgotten it. I can only think of him now as transfigured—as “a perfect man in Christ Jesus.”

The selection of the sermons contained in this volume is not mine, but that of one whose excellent judg-

ment and whose sacred relations to their author give her equal authority and ability to make it. They undoubtedly present his characteristic style of thought and mode of expression, and combine in the highest attainable degree the peculiar food which it seemed his mission to furnish for the Christian life. They are published not because a few partial friends desire it, but because those whose judgment deserves respect consider them exceedingly valuable, and believe that they cannot fail to find a very wide distribution among the thoughtful Christians of America.

Without speaking of the sermons more definitely than this at present, it is proper to satisfy at once the reader's wish to know something about the author. The when and where of his personal history can be very briefly recorded. He was born in Bristol, Me., April 15, 1815; fitted for college at the old Lincoln Academy of Newcastle, in that State; entered Bowdoin College in the autumn of 1832; graduated in 1836, and became at once principal of the academy in which he pursued his preparatory studies. After remaining in the most satisfactory discharge of the duties of this position for two years, he commenced his theological studies in Union Theological Seminary, New York, where he pursued them for two years, closing them with a year's connection with the Bangor Seminary, in his native State. On the 12th of October, 1842, he was ordained at Lewiston Falls, and installed over the Congregational Church there, having already supplied its pulpit for a year. He remained in this connection until 1858—a period of six-

teen years. On the 16th of June of that year he was installed as pastor of the North Congregational Church in Springfield, Mass., in which office he remained until his death, which took place in Lynn, at the house of his brother-in-law, Rev. J. B. Sewall, on the 29th of November, 1861. His dust reposes in the Springfield Cemetery, beneath a monument whose solidity and beauty express at once the value of his character and the strength of the affection with which he is remembered.

Mr. Drummond was a Christian who believed in Christianity. He was sublimely—sometimes awfully—in earnest. I have never known a man who seemed so thoroughly to realize the responsibilities of the Christian pulpit, and the tremendous import of the truths with which he dealt, as he. Profoundly impressed with the unworthiness of his own character, pitying the sinful world around him with a heart full of tears, haunted by the sad contemplation of the doom of unchristian men, religion was to him a grand, all-subordinating reality. Life itself was, in many of its respects, an awful thing to him; and the obscure problems of the universe—the destiny of his race—the mysteries of God's moral government—the scheme of Christian salvation—these enthralled him, possessed him, often almost crushed him. Preaching, with him, was something more than a holiday show of rhetoric—a pleasant utterance of general religious truths. He spoke as one commissioned of Heaven; and he could not have been more in earnest if he had been favored with a vision of the eternal city, or



been permitted to gaze upon the perdition of ungodly men.

Yet, with all his loyalty to the truth as he found it revealed in the Bible—for this was his sole authority in all matters relating to religion—with all his faithfulness in the preaching of doctrines the most terrible to himself and the most unpalatable to others, he always presented himself to men as a loving, pitying brother. The lesson he had learned of his own heart was a lesson of charity toward all men. There was no man so bad that he could not find something amiable in him ; there was no deed so base that he did not see in the doer's circumstances some explanation of it, or palliation for it. He loved men, women, and children—loved his kind with a positive affection—with a passion as constant and true as he exercised toward the precious ones of his own household. His sympathies were universal. He was at home with the coarse as well as the refined, loved to talk with the humble, always found it impossible to refuse money to those who asked for it, and only felt sad to think that he could do so little, and had so little to give, to make men happier and better.

And if Mr. Drummond was generous in the bestowal of affection, he was equally desirous of a return in kind. No man ever loved better and more widely than he, and no man ever craved affection more. To be loved warmly, tenderly, strongly by those around him to whom he gave the efforts of his life, was a desire second only in his heart to that of being loved and approved by his Master. Fame he did not seek for ; money he did

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not care for ; position had no charms for him ; but love—human love—he bathed his soul in it as a bird bathes her dusty and drooping feathers at a fountain. Love soothed him, comforted him, feasted and refreshed him. He was like a child in this. Love healed his wounds, rewarded his pains, and sweetened his life with its most precious delights.

A mind so much in earnest as his, engaged in such contemplations and such labors, could not exist in a frail body in which the nervous organization predominated, without producing either occasional or general depression. He was born by the sea, and it always seemed as if the sea gave to his life its keynote. The boy who stood upon the shore, looking out upon its limitless waters, dreaming of its mysteries, and seeing the dim sails sliding along the edge of the far horizon, and fading from sight, or watching the breakers as they rolled in upon the rocky coast, is the man who, through all his life, stood by the shore of a wider sea, dreaming of greater mysteries, covered with questions that came and went with the wind, or lashed by storms whose thunderous waves shook him where he stood like the convulsions of an earthquake. The burden of thought and feeling was always too heavy ; and, in the contemplation of himself and of his work, he was almost constantly depressed. With a rational conviction that a Christian ought to be the happiest man in the world, and with a Christian faith that he would not have surrendered for ten thousand worlds, he very rarely found himself the possessor of genuine Christian joy. He was

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a sick man during all his professional life, often sleepless, always thoughtful, bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, with all the burdens that his mind associated with the infinite passion, until that body tottered under its load, and fell.

In intellectual power and quality, Mr. Drummond was not only an uncommon man, but an uncommon style of man. He was an original thinker—a man whose sermons never could be predicted from the texts which formed their subjects. I do not mean, of course, that he labored to find strange lines of thought, or sought to present truth in unexpected aspects. The fact was, that he possessed a most distinctly marked individuality, which seemed to hold its independent relations to all truth, so that, when he spoke, everybody expected to hear something fresh—something he had never heard before, and something which no one else could have said or thought of. His familiar expositions of the Scriptures at evening meetings, or during the public readings of the Sabbath, were always remarkable for their freshness. So truly was this the case, that it was said, after he removed to Springfield, by one of his new flock, that Mr. Drummond had brought a new Bible with him. His reading of the Bible was itself an exposition, so thoroughly did he seem to understand and weigh the truths to which he was giving utterance. Though delighting in metaphysical research and labor, he never forgot his office, but always aimed to deal in a plain and practical way with the plain and practical people who formed the majority of his congregations.

In character, Mr. Drummond was one of the purest and most thoroughly truthful men I have ever known. He was not only above reproach, but above suspicion. No man with a positive character, like that which he possessed, ever passed through life without enemies; but slander herself never breathed a whisper against his personal character. It was so high, and so open to the light, that all men saw it, and even his enemies gave it their reverence. He combined the two characteristics of worldly wisdom and childlikeness in a most unusual degree. Reading character with the quickness of intuition, managing his relations with the two flocks of which he was the pastor with rare sagacity, finding his way to the hearts of those whom he wished to benefit with a tact that was marvellous, he was as simple in his tastes and feelings and as truthful as a boy. He seemed to have great faith in men, yet was never unconscious of their imperfections. He loved everything that was noble and gallant and good, admired everything that was strong and daring and beautiful, despised with all the intensity of his intense nature everything that was mean and cowardly, and hated and denounced all that was wrong. Longing for the redemption of the world, and laboring and praying for its elevation, the slowness of the progress of Christianity, and the prevalence of vice, poverty and wretchedness distressed him, and almost plunged him into despair.

In the pulpit he was a man of power. He always had something new to say, and a striking and impressive way of saying it; yet I have sometimes thought that his

sermons were hardly more impressive than his prayers. In these exercises he often became so absorbed and enraptured, that he seemed to lose the consciousness that there was an audience before him, turning partly around where he stood, and talking like a man inspired. His prayers were indeed a pouring out of his heart before God.

A pale-faced man, broad and a little stooping in the shoulders—a tall frame, with small muscles filled with nervous energy in every fibre—a pair of kind, blue eyes, sometimes looking through glasses constantly worn, and sometimes peering over them—a head covered heavily with light brown hair—action sometimes angular and hard, sometimes the perfection of power and grace, but always impressive—these words will do, perhaps, what words can do, to present Mr. Drummond, as he stood in his pulpit, to those who have never seen him there. His audiences were always still, and always awake. No man could hear him and withhold from him his attention. Usually calm and measured in his utterances, he often left the text of his sermons, and rose into a passion and power of eloquence that shook him as a reed is shaken by a hurricane, thrilling his hearers, and making fearful drafts upon his own vital resources.

It would naturally be supposed that a preacher possessing Mr. Drummond's reverence for the Bible, and his rare power of exposing and explaining it, would choose his subjects mainly from the sacred text: and this was the case; though he never forgot, in the selection of topics, the wants of his people, or turned a deaf ear to

the suggestions of current events. It was the criticism of one of his brothers in the ministry, that he "loaded too lightly;" and the criticism was based upon the fact that he rarely undertook to present more than one great, vital truth in a single sermon. He always went to work upon a sermon with a definite aim—with a single object in his mind which he wished to accomplish; and it was his theory, that if he could plant one great, practical Christian truth or motive in the hearts and minds of his audiences, by the talk of half an hour, it was all he could hope to do. He therefore never selected a subject that did not have a direct and immediate relation to the condition and the wants of his congregation; and, when he had selected it, he sacrificed everything it was necessary to sacrifice, and did everything in his power to do, to make it tell for good upon those for whom he labored. He presented the central, vital thought of each sermon in all possible aspects—sometimes with iteration and reiteration—and then drove it home to the hearts for which it had been prepared, with all the persuasion there is in love and all the power there is in logic.

His mode of writing and preaching was peculiar. Nearly all his sermons were written at a single sitting. To his nervous and feeble body the confinement of writing was as painful, almost, as crucifixion would have been. His sermons were therefore thought out as he sat reading, as he walked the streets, upon his bed; and, when he sat down to write, he had only to record with great rapidity the sermon which had already passed through the mental laboratory. He always wrote briefly

and completely ; yet it is doubtless true, that not a single sermon in this volume was delivered as it is here printed. Preaching always inspired him, and he seemed sometimes almost to revel in the world of fresh thought which his own incisive utterances opened to him. Interjections, enlargements, and additions quite transformed his sermons ; and the only question I have had concerning the publication of this collection is, whether, after taking away the person of the preacher, with all his magnetism and all that he uttered under the direct inspiration of preaching, there would be enough left to represent him worthily, and convey his characteristic power to the hearts of his readers. The sermons in this volume are therefore brief, and the reader has the explanation of the fact ; and although those who listened to their delivery will miss much of the language they heard, I think they will find the central, vital thoughts intact. There is, doubtless, an advantage in brevity, particularly in a sermon which is to be read ; and it is possible that these discourses will be more acceptable to the general public in the present shape, than if they were loaded with additions inspired by occasions which are past, and circumstances that are not universal. As the work of a great-hearted, large-minded man, who loved God and his fellows, and gave his life a willing offering to both, it is my privilege to present these sermons to the public. They came forth from a life rich in Christian experience, fertile in thought, and abounding in charity ; and I am sure that God will breathe something of His life through them into the world.

J. G. H.

*THOUGHTS*  
FOR  
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

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I.

THE CONSTRAINING POWER OF A PERSONAL  
ATTACHMENT TO CHRIST.

*For the love of Christ constraineth us.—1 COR. v. 14.*

IT may be doubted whether Christ's love to Paul and his fellow disciples, or their love to Him, was the constraining impulse of their lives. Probably it makes but little difference. Christ's love to us can never stir us till it awakens our own. His throbbing, burning heart must quicken our cold and dead hearts. His voice of affection must echo through all the chambers of our souls, and stir them to right feeling and action. Christ came to establish a kingdom of love. He founded it upon His own sufferings and death. Having founded it, He went up to heaven, and now sits upon the throne of universal power, superintending its concerns. He never intermits His interest in it; slowly, steadily, in His own way, He is



causing it to extend. Others have founded kingdoms and wielded sceptres. But His is different from all others in that its all-pervading and all-subduing spirit is love. All that come into it are attracted to it by love to Him ; all its activities are those of love. Regarded in any light in which we may choose to view Him, Jesus is the mightiest personage of all history. Strike from the world's history what has been done for Jesus' sake—go back along the track of time, and erase the deeds that have been wrought, the self-denials undergone, the books written, the lives lived, the martyrdoms endured, the stern missions begun and prosecuted, and how poor would the world be ! Strike out the love to Jesus that human souls have felt, and all that it has prompted them to do, and what a waste would the past eighteen centuries present ! The blackest pages of human history have been illumined by some deeds of true glory that love to Jesus has begotten. When wickedness has been most rampant, there have ever been some who have sung their songs in the night, irradiated the moral gloom with their light, and been ready to seal their affection by their blood.

*Personal attachment to Jesus*—its influence and power—this shall be our theme.

And it may be well to say, in the first place, that Christ is worthy of all the love that any man or all men may give. Sometimes you are struck by the in-

congruity between the amount of love bestowed on an object, and the worth of the object itself. Your ideas of fitness are crossed; more is given than is proper and right. Our hearts, like our intellects, expand, widen, deepen, as their objects are great. They cannot grow simply by their own forces, independent of external objects. They must have some vast, towering framework on which to stretch themselves—some trellis on which to rise. They are like vines that must climb up on something. Sometimes you have seen a vine reaching the top of its trellis, and then attempting to start off and climb up into thin air; but it droops and falls. And so you have seen human hearts reaching the limits of their objects; reposing on them, they can grow no more. They must have something more and higher, or they are dwarfed forever.

Now, no soul ever yet reached thus the limits of its growth, with Christ as its object. No heart ever yet was compelled to love some being higher and nobler than He, in order to keep on growing—in order to become a greater and better heart. The greatest man that ever livèd never yet came to the end of Christ's mind and heart, reached its boundaries, and must henceforth have some other being to know and love. The race, in all stages of its culture and expansion, may bring all the wealth of its thought and love to Christ, and He can bear it all up and all on. After

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studying Him longest, after loving Him most, the richest in endowment are constrained to exclaim: "Oh, the depth!" No man, no angel was ever yet compelled to say of Him, that "the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

Again, this personal attachment to Christ gives the mightiest impulse, affords the strongest and most constant working force that can operate upon the human soul. The problem which any system that would regenerate and save man must solve is this: how to stir his dead affections, draw him out of himself as a centre and an end—how to set him forward toward God and heaven and all good beings, and keep him going in the right paths, in spite of sloth and passion and sin, with all the steadiness and certainty with which the stars move in their orbits; no wavering, no backsliding. This is the problem. This must be done, not by an outward force, but by an inward one, that shall pierce to the very centre of a man's being, and grapple and hold him in the course toward God and right, with a calm and yet resistless energy. What shall effect this? What in us—I mean not without, but with the aids of the Divine Spirit working voicelessly in the depths of our nature—what, so far as it comes within the range of our intelligence, shall draw and hold us to right and duty,

bear us on clear into heaven, to mingle in its scenes and employments? Fear of coming wrath cannot do it. It chills and freezes. It can block up the path to ruin, and make us tremble as we go down its slope; but it cannot draw to heaven. Shall conscience? It can accuse, drive us up against the sharp edge of the Law, and pierce and wound us; it can flash its lurid fires in the face of the soul, but it cannot impel us constantly and joyously to self-conquest and holiness. We want something that shall cast out fear—something that shall even silence conscience—something that shall go over it and sink it, as the dark summits of granite rocks are sunk when the tides of the sea flow in and cover them; for a man never knows that he has a conscience when he is doing right, any more than he knows that he has a heart when he is well. He gets grounded and pierced on the sharp points of his conscience when the heart's tides are out, and is floated off when they come in. It is not fear—not conscience. What is it? We believe, a strong personal attachment to Christ. This is the working force that shall bind and hold us.

Observe the advantages which such a love has to effect this end. It is love to a *person*, not a cold, abstract principle. The soul of man cannot be brought to love, live for, fight, suffer, die for it alone. Principle, in its baldest shape, has its devotees, its select heroes, who would clasp it, and bleed and die

for it. But they are rare—the topmost men of the race—the men who rise above the common level, like the mountain ranges; and even these cannot live and work well and joyously in the cold, clear region of mere principle. They must leave the summits, with their frosty air and their coronal of stars, and come down and work where men live and hearts throb. If we love principles well, we love them best incarnated, looking out of human eyes, and speaking in human tones. There never was that man yet who would not, if he were going to suffer and die for a principle, prefer to die for it as it appealed to him in some noble form of man or some lovely face of woman. We like principle, but we like men and women embodying principle better. We most of us love warm flesh and blood. Armies have gone to the tented field—the enthusiastic movements of the race have started and gone on under the impulse of living men, not of mere principle. The Bible recognizes this tendency of the race. It is full of persons—its appeal is to persons—its love is love to persons. It is the love, not of right, but of Christ, that shall constrain us. Heaven must send out its representative, must incarnate its concentrated principle and love in Christ, and up and out to Him go human affections.

But not only do our affections go out to persons more than to abstract principles, but there is something in the very nature of Christ adapted to engage

them most promptly and absorbingly. That nature we believe to be peculiar, unique. There is none like Him in creation. He stands out marked, distinct from all others. We can hardly analyze and describe, or pour our ideas of Him into the moulds of human language. We want some heavenly dialect in which to set him forth. We call Him *man* and He is; but when we have defined man, fetched a compass about him, and included in our survey all our ideas of man, we have not defined Christ, have not exhausted at all our ideas of Him. We call Him God. The Bible calls Him so. It ascribes such works to Him that we are left without any proof of the Divine existence if *He* is not God. But when we wish to clasp His two relations together, put a girdle around them both, and present Him to human thought in His complex perfection, we are constrained to coin a term. We find none ready made to our hand. We call Him the God-man, the Divine-human, the Celestial-terrestrial, the Infinite-finite. We thus bring Him down to earth, and He stands before us in human form. We thus exalt Him to heaven, far above human comprehension. He is the mystic ladder—its base on the earth, its top above the clouds. Now this Being that we attempt to set forth with such antagonistic phrases, so far removed from our power of analysis, so alien, if you please, from our logic, is yet the very Being to affect our hearts. We cannot measure Him.

*Here*, He is a man; *there*, He is a God, and we cannot make the edges of the yawning chasm that seems forever to separate His two natures to our reason, approach and coalesce. We know Him, and yet we do not know Him. *Here*, He is a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, borne like a lamb to the slaughter, and yet opening not His mouth—weak like one of us; *there*, He is a God calling worlds into being, ruling all nature, healing the sick, raising the dead, submitting to law, and yet above it. It takes His greatness with His limitations—His strength and His weakness—His divinity and His humanity, to affect us most. On His one side He is human—a man and brother—coming all the way down to us, entering into our feelings, our experiences—seeing men and things out of our eyes, that heart of His bending to our griefs, and swelling with our joys. We put our heart to His, and His answers it beat for beat. We would not miss that bending down to us, that standing side by side with us, and that thought that now to-day in heaven, He retains, as written upon an iron leaf, all that He was and felt.

But then we want more—not in another, but in Him; if we can have it, we want the Divine also—the human to know, to think with, and feel with; the Divine, to be utterly incomprehensible, to encompass us, to overarch us, to flow into our weakness, to seize us and bear us aloft as upon eagles' wings; the hu-

man, to grasp—the Divine, to elude us; the human, to stand in clear, distinct outline before us—the Divine to tower infinitely above, to be lost in that thick darkness that shrouds His throne. We want a being that shall come down to our sympathies, and so stand on the same plane with us; with the tides of feeling flowing through us both; and, at the same time, one before whom we shall bow with reverence and awe—the very Being that we have in Christ, one whose thoughts and feelings span that mighty void between God and man. The Bible gives us Christ—the God-with-us—the Man-divine—that Being who towers above our reason, but grasps and holds our hearts.

Now this person, so unique, so divinely and humanly constituted, and so adapted to win our affections by His intrinsic qualities, presents Himself to us as our greatest benefactor. He has illustrated for us the nature of a true life, when we had lost the ideal. He has spoken to us, and revealed to us the Godhead when it had vanished out of the world's mind. He has poured new light and new love over the world. He has met for us the claims of a violated law, and lifted clear off from us the crushing weight of its penalty. He has kindled new hopes in our despondency. He has opened a way to heaven, and gilded the darkest night of human sorrow with radiance. He rose from the grave triumphant for us—has gone to heaven—to prepare mansions for his



friends. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." He subdues our enemies; and will at length, if we will trust Him, bring us to His blessed presence, and present us faultless before His Father's throne. Have we not here a Being adapted by all that He is, and all that He has done for us, to win our affections, and hold them most tenaciously? And are we not right in saying that love to Christ—a person—such a person, and that person our highest benefactor—presents the strongest working force that can enter a human soul, to elevate and purify it? Verily, if He be not Divine, then has our Maker projected in upon the theatre of human history a being who has proved himself a most formidable rival for the hearts of the race! All over the world, multitudes of the most devout students of His Word do love and honor Him, not as the rival of the Father, but as His fellow and equal.

Thirdly: Strong personal attachment encompasses all the doings of men that are right, and, taking them into its keeping, elevates and dignifies them. Anything that a man need do or should do at all, he may and should do out of love to Christ. Say of a deed, or a series of deeds, or a whole life, that love to Christ will not permit it, and you put the stamp of reprobation upon it. You exclude it wholly from the circle of life, if love to the Master will not allow one to do it. All that is right, love to Him will prompt

us to do better : all that is wrong we cannot do at all. And encompassing thus all right action, it gives all of it elevation and true dignity.

There are departments of work, of life, that of themselves elevate those who engage in them. They enlist and exhaust all and more than all the faculties which the greatest can bring to them. They seem to be above men, and beckon men on and up to them. The best-endowed go up to them, not down to them. There are other departments of work, and these enlist the mass of the race, where mind has little scope, and receives little or no enlargement. After a slight initiation into them, most of the faculties are disengaged—are left unenlisted, or at least untaxed. Now, in these departments of life, engaging the rank and file of men, what shall elevate them ? What shall bring them up into full and free communion with the best of the race, put them into fellowship with the very highest, and thus bind men in one living and holy brotherhood ? What, but an all-encompassing affection, pervading the highest, reaching the lowest, and thus lifting them all together, one compact mass ! And if we will look more deeply, we shall find that it is the heart—the kind of heart that men put into their work, that gives them esteem and respect among their fellows. A true and noble affection elevates the humblest toiler. Take away the heart that may be put into it, and most of life degenerates into drudg-

ery, and makes us inquire with the Psalmist, in a sceptical spirit as to the wisdom of our Maker—"Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?" Almost all life is reduced to a level, barren waste; nearly all men lose the respect of men—the ideas which we wish to attach to a man—except as noble affections undergird and lift them aloft. Two men may do the same work; the one may do it to gratify a base and ignoble passion, the other to gratify his best affections; the one may rise early, work hard, and retire late, and, seizing the fruits of his toil, may hurry to drown his reason and his manhood in the intoxicating bowl; the other, working by his side, no harder, no longer, at close of day, with the fruits of his toil, may hasten to his home, where the fire of love forever burns on its altar, to meet the happy smiles of wife and kindred. The outward work of both is the same—the prompting passion makes the difference. Now there lives not the man, however humble, on the footstool, who may not elevate himself in the esteem of the noblest, by the affection that shall prompt his doings. He may engage in the most unintellectual labor—he may dig in the ditch, or delve in the mine, rarely breathing the upper air, or seeing the sun; and yet if he love the Lord Jesus Christ, apostles and martyrs, the most hoary dwellers in the New Jerusalem, those who have for ages been under the tuition and discipline of heaven, call him brother, and that too

without stooping to do it. He stands within the circle of heaven's nobility—has heaven's coronet on his brow by having heaven's spirit in his heart. No toil is so ignoble that Christ will not take him that does it into alliance with Himself. Let a man love Christ, and Christ passes His golden cincture about him, weaves him as a thread into that beautiful web that will gild the walls of heaven. He is in the select band of the glorious immortals. He is dignified by what he is, not by what he does. Better be the poorest slave with love to Christ, than the richest master without it—better dig a ditch out of love to Him, than thunder with the loftiest eloquence, or conquer a kingdom for self. The affection dignifies the man, do what he may.

Fourthly: Personal love to Christ gives tone, depth, proportion, and impulse to our love of man. This is a philanthropic age, nominally so, and, we believe, really so. Man as such—man apart from his rank, his wealth, his relations; has risen and is still rising. The great plane of humanity is mounting to a higher level; man's welfare as a creature of God is more sought. Christian ideas of him, rather than mere political ones, are more and more entertained. He is beginning to be regarded as having an individual life and interest, and not as a part of a great machine that we call society. There is a philanthropy apart from the Church, and even apart from the Bible, com-

peting with the Church and the believers of the Bible, more loud, vociferous, and in one sense, more active. Now, an unchristian philanthropy never can be a deep, genial, sunny, safe philanthropy. It may roar like the thunder, flash like the lightning, and heave society like the earthquake. It is wild, tumultuous, restless, like the sea. A true philanthropy is grafted into Christ, is based primarily on love to Him. Its sphere of activity is the earth, out among its dwellers: in the hovels of the poor, in the prison, among the degraded, the enslaved, the oppressed; wherever a man sighs and groans, there he finds its object, and room for its activities; beginning at home, seeking out the most crushed and oppressed first, and then widening its circle even to the ends of the earth. There may grow up in any community, a philanthropy truculent and fierce, apart from Christ and love for Him; but the philanthropy that is to abide—that is to reach through life—surmount obstacles—be patient, firm, consistent,—working down out of sight of men—sounding no trumpet before it—having no speech and no language, like the stars, and like them gilding some dark spot,—such a philanthropy is born of the Spirit, and is nurtured by the spirit of Christ. Give it other parentage, and it will lack tone, consistency, power, will break and part somewhere.

Fifth: Personal attachment to Christ is the most permanent affection. It not only o'er-masters, but

where it exists, it outlives all other affections. These may work with power, prompt to effort and self-denial. It is part of the glory of our humanity that they do so. I would not pluck away one pillar from that glorious fabric—a human soul. Even those affections that have their main theatre of action on the earth are beautiful. They work long and well, accomplish great things. The husband and father leaves his home, goes out on stormy seas, doubles distant capes, parts from home long, for the sake of home. The patriot leaves his peaceful retreat—the scene where his young feelings grew, and where the sweet amenities of life are enjoyed, and goes to the tented field, and jeopardises life and limb for his country. These sights are beautiful, and the affections that prompt them may be lasting; but even these may wither and die. The wife that we lay in tears in the grave, trembling lest the very clods shall fall too heavily upon her coffin, we may forget. Time, in its slow marchings, effaces our tears, and almost our love. The object of our affection dies, and it too often dies with it. But Christ ever liveth. He is in us by His own quickening spirit, He stirs our hopes, He kindles our love, and draws up, in His own silent but efficacious way, our affections unto Himself. With waning powers and passing years, we love Him more as we come nearer and nearer to Him, and when the doors begin to be shut in the streets, and the sound of the grinding is

low, and we rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low, when fears are in the way, and desire faileth, when the silver cord is loosened, and the bowl is breaking at the fountain, when time fades, and eternity looms up—then our affection for Christ shines out most brightly. It rises higher than all others, is deeper and firmer, and survives them all.

Thus I believe love to Christ as the manifested Deity, God with us, is the mightiest working force in the human soul. It is the great constraining influence. All life must be based on it—all our doings must be strung on it to give them true character and continuity. Somehow we must get into this love, must be borne on by it. We pass into it, and we pass into the great currents, we are among the vital forces, within the sweep of the fundamental laws of creation. What we do effectively and well, what we do that shall coalesce with the doings of Heaven, that shall answer to and be like them, must be done from love to Christ. We must be benefactors—must bless and do good—feed the hungry—clothe the naked—knock the fetters from the slave, with love to Him encompassing us like an atmosphere, and binding us like a golden chain. We can only add to the permanent wealth of creation, we can only build a fabric that shall abide, when we build from love to Christ. So that the man who does not love Christ, is

out of the great drift of things, he is out of harmony with all right beings and things, he is among discordant and jarring forces, he does not join the great chorus, he is in chaos. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he is for discord, not harmony in God's domain, and as sure as that dominion is to be triumphant, as sure as its principles are to be the all-prevalent ones, he is and must be by the very constitution of things, Anathema.

I have spoken of personal attachment to Christ as the constraining impulse of life—of all life. It should impel us to our daily tasks. It should preside over all our secular pursuits, and give them an up-lift and elevation. It should be carried into the shop, to the farm. It should fire the tongue of the lawyer—should impel the physician in his round of duty—should preside at the fireside, and make home more sweet and sunny. Above all it must have its seat of power in the heart of him who, as Christ's ambassador, would fairly represent his Master, and lift perishing men out of their narrowness and sin into a divine life. It must be the inspiration of the pulpit, or it is a dead thing for the great end for which it is established. As the love of Christ shall constrain us, we as ministers shall be men of power, acknowledged of God, and in due time also confessed of men.

My brother! this love must fill your heart—it must touch your lips as with a live coal from off



God's altar—it must breathe in your sermons, your exhortations, your pastoral calls, and in your daily life. Let it be in you and abound, and it will carve paths for you to the highest, the most permanent success.

NOTE.—Preached at the ordination of Rev. J. B. Sewall, Lynn, February 28th, 1855.

## II.

### THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

*For the Lord is good.*—Ps. c. 5.

THIS declaration is very brief. It is easily understood, and will be controverted in set terms perhaps by few or none. It will secure an easy entrance into, and we fear an easy and rapid transit through, the minds of most. Persons that rarely, if ever, think of God, that never bring Him into close contact with their souls ; persons who are without God in the world, will with the most heartless indifference assent to the statement that God is good, and with the bald assent will dismiss the statement as thoughtlessly as they make it.

The truth is, God is never brought sufficiently near to the hearts of such persons, to stir them into thought about Him. He is a Being afar off, one with whom they have little to do ; so they dismiss any plausible affirmation with respect to Him with a placid indifference, and their assent has as little virtue in it, as their dissent would have. But let one awake to reflect upon the position of the Governor of the universe ;

upon His power, absolutely without limit ; upon the fact that our destiny for eternity is in his hands ; that He can raise us by a word to bliss inconceivable, or sink us to woe unutterable ; that all we are or hope to be is wholly dependent on Him ; let one think of all this, and he cannot then permit any statement as to what God is to glide with an easy currency through the mind. He will seize and hold it, he will look at it through and through, go round about it to ascertain on what basis it rests, and what are the proofs of it, and when he pronounces it true, he will not dismiss it, but will retain it, lodge it in his heart, and make it the centre of a whole circle of thoughts and emotions, purposes and principles of action.

As we have said, it is easy with a cool indifference to admit that God is good ; a contrary statement would shock us all perhaps, and yet there are few probably who have not at times in their history been tempted, if not disposed, to doubt it. When brought into great straits, when overwhelmed with disasters or afflictions, when property, or health, or friends, have been taken from us, when all has been dark within and without, it has been no easy thing then to hold on to the admission which we made in our hours of ease. For the heart then to retain its confidence in the goodness of God, to say with the Psalmist, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him" is indeed a triumph of faith.

I am aware that at such times it is not enough to have the reason convinced and fortified, it is not enough that the higher and nobler principles of our nature speak for God and his goodness. The heart rebels against the reason, or at times raises a mist, which envelops the reason and obscures its vision. There are times when it takes captive the judgment, and thus the whole soul is swept down the rushing tide to the gulf of a cheerless scepticism ; when it sees no star nor sun for many days, when it sees and can see no good and tender Being upon the throne ruling over all, but stern iron despotism, binding all things in its hard embrace. But while I know all this, yet it is well to have the reason and judgment convinced and fortified, so that though a temporary insurrection of the passions may silence them and hurry them away, they may yet be heeded anon, and bring the soul back to act calmly on its settled convictions ; and it is my present purpose to indicate a few of the reasons which should settle us in the truth of the statement of our text,—reasons upon which we may anchor ourselves, and which will help us to sustain ourselves when we are tempted to entertain doubts about the goodness of God.

It may seem no conclusive reason, yet I advance it as the first, and I believe the strongest reason for believing that God is good,—that He says so.

I need not quote passages from His word to show

this. It is assumed through it all, and in it all, and is specifically declared in numerous instances. He says that He is good, infinitely so. Now God only knows Himself, no one else can know Him, for "who by searching can find him out unto perfection?" and knowing Himself He can have no temptation to make false statements about Himself. If He is evil, He is so from choice, for there is no one above him to compel or influence Him to be evil. He is so by preference, and if He prefers to be evil, He must prefer to be known as He is.

But He says that He is good and we must trust Him. If we will look at the matter more deeply, we shall find that all reasoning starts from a basis of trust in God. We cannot reason at all without data, and where are our data without confidence in God? Where is our confidence in the evidence of our senses unless we first trust the Maker of our senses? We look at an object, and we call it large, but unless we trust God, how can we tell but that what looks large is really small? How can we tell but that He formed the senses so as to deceive us? We look at the heavens in a clear night, we say there are stars there, but how do we know but that we are so formed as to see things just where and as they are not? In the whole conduct of our natural life, in every step that we take on this solid earth, whenever we trust ourselves on the sea, whenever we do one single thing, we have to

act on the belief that God did not intend to deceive us, that He is worthy of credit. We do not reflect how much and how constantly we are compelled to trust God.

Now if we trust Him in other things, why should we not when He says He is good? All demonstrations of His goodness drawn from His works, must resolve themselves into simple trust in Him. If His works prove Him good, how do we know but that His works are intended to deceive us, if we have no trust in Him? If what we know or can know of Him, seems to prove Him good, how can we know but that what we do not and cannot know of Him might prove Him bad? All manifestations that God has made of Himself, can prove nothing with reference to Himself, unless we believe Him true. Trust in God then is the basis of all reasoning, all speaking, all acting, nay of all life itself; and when we have a clear definite declaration from God, we must trust it if we pretend to reason. It is moral insanity not to trust God. When a man ceases to rely upon his senses we call him insane, and when a man ceases to trust the simple word of God, he is morally insane. When God says that He is good, it is the glory of right reason to credit it, and if a man refuses to believe God and demands demonstration, we tell him that without trust in God his demonstrations are of no value. What are the demonstrations of mathemat-

ics even, to a man who will not trust God? How can he tell that things are as they seem, unless God made him true and to see things as they are? A man that believes that God made him, cannot even be assured that two and two make four without trust in God. We are adrift. In the most emphatic sense, we walk in a vain show. All things about and above us are a mere pretence unless we trust God, and when one discards the words of God, and demands demonstrations of the goodness of God, independent of His word, he should mark well where his demand will lead him.

But in confirmation of what He says, I observe in the second place, that God has so made the soul of man that it demands and approves of a good God. God made the soul, He made it as He pleased. He had all possible types before His mind, and He had power to select which He would. He was not confined to the one which He chose, but He has made man after the constitution which we now see. Now as the human soul is made, it approves of what is good; even in its fallen state, though it may not choose, yet it does approve the good. No one can look upon a bad act, a bad man, and approve either as bad. There is not one that could look up to the throne of the universe and see an infinitely malignant Being there, and say it was fitting that He should be there. All immediately and spontaneously would dis-

approve and reprobate the occupancy of the throne by such a Being. But with the ability to make us as He chose, would He wish to create a whole race and order of intelligences to condemn Himself? And yet He has done this if He is not good. Could it be imagined that any being with a power to create other beings as he chose would create them to hate and loathe him! Would he put within them a conscience all whose impulses and convictions would be against him? Would he wish wantonly to be abhorred? Would he wish to build a theatre and then crowd it with immortal beings, just for the sake of having his character and acts condemned? And yet this is so if God is not good. The very fact then that all orders of intelligences that we know of, have been so made by God as to approve only of those who are good, is itself incontrovertible proof that He is good.

Thirdly, what we know of His works strengthens the proofs to which we have already referred. The laws and arrangements of God, as seen in His creation in their regular, unimpeded operation, are productive of good. There is misery, there are woe and suffering in God's world, but then these are obviously not the end designed by the arrangements of God. No law of His is intended to secure suffering. The law of gravitation is productive of suffering, but only through its violation. The human frame has its laws; where they are in full play and harmony, symmetry, health,



pleasure are the result. Violate them and then only do you suffer. So with all the laws both physical and moral which God has established. They are designed to secure happiness. They secure that design when kept. Now if all the laws and arrangements of God are intended to secure happiness, does not this manifest design indicate goodness on the part of God?

But you say that notwithstanding the design, there is actual misery in the world. But misery how, I ask,—in keeping or violating the designs and laws of God? Evidently in violating them. But do you say again that a good and almighty Being was obligated to keep His creatures from violating His law and thwarting His designs, and so making themselves miserable? But can you prove this? Can you show that an infinitely good and great Being must keep misery out of His creation? Misery is no evidence surely of His goodness, but the creation of free intelligences with a capacity to break down and thwart wise designs may be an evidence of goodness. A world of free beings, though miserable, is better than a world of slaves, though as happy as slaves could be. The heart of a being is known by his designs. Now if the designs of God are for the production of happiness, and free moral agents, endowed with powers to run counter to the laws of God, make themselves miserable by abusing their powers, then this misery so

introduced may afford no proof of lack of goodness in God at all. Viewed simply in this light, it may be a proof of His goodness, if it is a proof of goodness in any ruler to uphold at any expense his wise laws.

But I suggest as a fourth, and almost supernumerary proof that God is good—the great remedial agencies which He has brought into being. I call it a supernumerary proof. I do not think it needful to establish His goodness. If God had evidently established arrangements for securing the happiness of His creatures, and had left them with powers and motives to conform to those arrangements, then we think the evidently kind designs of God would have vindicated the goodness of His heart. But when His good laws were broken, and so misery was introduced, then we see a vast system of remedial agents, wholly useless while the arrangements of God were complied with, suddenly developing themselves. There lie in ambush in the human frame vast recuperative energies, and when once it is marred or wounded, these spring to their posts, and seek to repair the injury, working by day and by night. When disease invades and prostrates it, all creation offers its pharmacopœia to heal. From mountain summits, from ocean depths, from the desert's gloom, from the very bowels of the earth, nature brings her healing remedies. And when moral law is broken—when a whole race in thick phalanx rush madly in the road of rebellion,

and so to speedy ruin, then comes in the great remedial moral remedy which the Gospel reveals. Now we say that all these remedial agencies, and they are innumerable, are an extra proof of the goodness of God. We could not have anticipated them before they came. They are so much superadded to the benevolent marks which were inscribed upon the original frame-work of creation.

I can only add, as a proof that God is good, the simple truth, that just in proportion as His creatures know more of Him, they are more and more convinced that He is so. Those who have the largest minds, and apply all their powers most earnestly to the study of God, deem Him good. Angels know Him best, and they think Him good. Good men know Him, and they think Him good. And as they come to know Him more, to commune and sympathize with Him more, they come into a higher appreciation of His goodness.

Now, a person is to be judged by those who know most of him. We regard not the prejudices, the blind guesses and conjectures of ignorance, but the affirmations of knowledge. To be sure, the wisest know but little of God. A child could better understand a Napoleon, or a Newton, than a Gabriel could understand Him. He is compelled to gaze and cry, "Oh, the depths! His ways are past finding out."

But then, what we do know of God is like what

we do not know,—a little knowledge can speak better of Him than entire ignorance, just as one who had seen a single particle of sand from our world, could judge of it better than one who had seen none. And little as the best know of God, yet that they, as they know Him more, esteem Him more highly, is proof to me that He will bear to be known.

I have simply indicated a train of thought, which, I trust, you will follow out. If, in your darker hours, when the night wraps your souls, and you see no sun nor stars, these suggestions will afford you relief, my object will be consummated. God is good. Anchor yourself there. Receive this as a great truth. Never give it up. When Satan would assail you, and seek to rend it from you, hold it with an iron grasp. Hold it when the billows go over your soul, and you are sunk in deep waters. Grasp it while you live; hold it firmly while you die.

NOTE.—Preached in Lewiston Falls, July, 1851; and in Springfield, June, 1859.

### III.

#### CHRISTIANS—THE HERITAGE OF GOD.

*The Lord's portion is his people.*—DEUT. xxxii. 9.

THIS is said primarily of the Jews. God selected them out of all nations, and subjected them to peculiar discipline, and designed them for special ends. But the declaration is equally true—perhaps more true—of His people now—allied to Him by spiritual affinities—all of them sharing His nature, and seeking His glory. He has the world before Him out of which to choose, and He selects them. He says, “I will set apart these for myself, on these will I put my seal; these shall be mine. The Lord’s portion is His people.”

He has made the world, and put into it all that we find. He has crowded it with living beings, and furnished it with intelligent, moral creatures. He has a special interest in this world. He does not mean to give it up to His enemies, or to take its chance. He superintends it. He is at work in it, and means to have, speaking after the manner of man, his pay out of it, for all the thought, and work, and

suffering He has bestowed on it. He means out of this immense tumult and struggle of time, out of the changes and revolutions of earth, to extract some result that shall be worthy of it all,—some portion that will satisfy Him, and permit Him to feel, when the drama of Time is closed up, that this globe has not swung in its orbit in vain. He means to secure some precious treasures that will meet the wishes and expectations of all orders of holy beings, and enable them to feel that the creation of this world was not a mistake, and its equipment and supervision a total loss.

Now what is it that God intends to get out of this world—putting all time, and all beings and things into a vast crucible? What is the final result, the residuum that He expects and will have, that will make Him look upon this troubled world, and all its painful history, with delight? The answer is in our text. It is “His people.” They are His portion. They are what He expects to win from the world, and bring off safe from the world’s hazards—safe from its final wreck.

As we look at God so great, so holy, so glorious, and then look down at His people as they have been in all past ages, as they are now after so much influence brought to bear upon them, so much discipline and education bestowed upon them, we think, and sometimes say, that it seems a poor portion for one so

great and good to select and to obtain out of earth. Can it be that these people called Christians, can be all that God is to have out of this weary battle of life and earth? Can these men and women so imperfect—so grovelling at times—so prone and so clinging to earth,—can these be a portion that a God would choose, and with which He will be satisfied? If this is all, it appears to us in certain moods of mind, that all things have been made in vain. Are these the best products of earth? If so, the best are poor.

Besides, in all past ages, they have been few in number, never probably a tithe of earth's population. The vast mass have lived without God in the world—rarely recognizing His existence—almost never his authority. Can these people, so few, and withal so imperfect, be *the* portion of the Almighty? So it must be, so our Text affirms. These are the ones for whom the world is made—these the ones for whom it is kept spinning in its orbit. It is the souls that love Him, or will love Him in the earth, for whom He has built and guides the earth. It is not the dead treasures,—it is not the mighty seas or mountains,—it is not the teeming race of animals,—it is not the souls that will not love Him, not those that are His portion, but His people.

We have intimated that these Christians as they have been or are, constitute a poor portion for such a Being to accept. If it be so, it might yet be said that

they are the best there is. It cannot be dead matter, or the forms of beauty and grandeur into which this matter is wrought, neither can it be the living souls that know and feel and love themselves and others, but will not love Him,—it cannot be these that He will select. So that if there be anything that will please our Maker, anything that He will preserve from the tides of ruin that are sweeping over all things, and engulfing them, it must be His people who love Him at least a little ; who present at least some few of the lineaments of their Father's face. If they are poor, they are yet the best ; if anything is worth preserving, these are. If the earth is not made for tears and sickness and death to hold carnival in, to have free and final sway in, if anything is to be brought through the great storms and the surging waves safe to some happy, peaceful shore, to live and honor the Maker of all things, it must be His own people that love Him.

It is said that they are few. They are so in any one age in the past ; even in the best age and best country they do not perhaps constitute a majority. And yet the Scriptures do not intimate that in the ultimate winding up of things, the aggregate of God's people will be small. The Bible seeks to excite no tears, no lamentations, because so few will join in the chorus of redemption. It gives no intimation that the Father's house will lack occupants, or that any of its



apartments will stand vacant. The whole tone of the Bible, when it speaks of the final issue of time—the final results of all this world's history, is one of jubilee and triumph, never of sorrow and despondency. There is no intimation that God will make a sad failure out of this enterprise of earth, or that He will lack hearts and voices redeemed from earth to praise Him. There will be no thinness in the ranks—no poverty of hearts or voices when all His people, the portion of the Lord, shall be gathered in. The Bible never puts a minor strain into the songs that the people of God will sing when they shall finally assemble on Mount Zion in the city of our God, and if the Bible seems content with the numbers of God's people, His portion gathered out of earth, we surely may be.

I have alluded to imperfections in God's people, their frequently low and narrow views and aims, their contracted affections, and have spoken of these as a ground of dissatisfaction in choosing them as His portion. Can it be that the great God will select persons so full of faults and be content with them as His portion?

In reply, it may be said that He is not satisfied with them as they now are, He looks to what they may be, to their inherent capacities, and to what He can make out of them. We even do not regard a thing for what it is, but for what it may become, for what we can make out of it. The sculptor, with his

mind's eye, beholds the finished statue in the rough block of marble, and he rejoices in it before he has struck a blow. The painter looks upon the canvass, and it shines with the consummated picture, ere he has applied his brush. We look upon the infant helpless in its mother's arms, and if we had a prophet's eye, we might already rejoice in him as one who was destined to revolutionize an age or an empire, and bring in a new reign of righteousness and ultimate peace. We look upon a rocky soil, we see its capacities, and it already waves in fancy with luxuriant crops. But a little more than two centuries since, this vast continent was a wilderness. Its acres lay all untilled, its streams ran idly to the sea, its harbors were not pressed by a keel: all was still save as the yell of the savage echoed through the forest, or resounded along the shores. It was a continent yielding nothing, and yet of immense capacities. The powers of energetic men have grappled with it, and we see what they have done with it. An inferior race might have come in and overrun it, and it would to them have been all undeveloped. We always look at a thing rightly, when we look at it and estimate it, not in view of what it is, but in view of what it has the capacity under proper helps and appliances to become.

The whole world is doubtless yet in germ. There lie in shaded forests—up rocky slopes—in untrodden valleys, gardens that will shine with unimagined beau-

ties, and that will load the air with the finest odors. All things have capacities of which we know but little. But we are assured by inspiration of a fact which we might suppose to be true without it. It is, that it doth not yet appear what these imperfect people who constitute the portion of God shall be. We cannot judge of their future by their present—of what they may be by what they are. The most unpromising buds bloom into the fairest flowers. The most imperfect Christians may develop into souls that will shine with eternal glory. The people of God are the most improvable of all creatures. They have that in them which is the germ of all lasting development and progress,—the love of God. The more we look at it the more we shall see that the soul grows by its heart, not by its head; by its affections, not by its abstract thought; by what links it in sweet joy with God and His creatures, not by what projects it up into a lonely, selfish and temporary conspicuity. The soul that rises by the head, is like a body thrown up by volcanic force that soon spends itself. The soul that rises by its affections, is like a planet kept in its eternal course by the law of gravitation. We must have love to God, we must be God's people to have the law of a true and lasting growth, of a beautiful and harmonious development within us.

Moreover it is not what the people of God now so imperfect, now so apparently unworthy of being select-

ed by God as His portion, may become by any law of growth, any inherent capacities that may be in them, but what they may become under the regimen, the discipline, the education of God. "My Father," says Christ, "is the *husbandman*." Now we know very well that one husbandman will make a barren soil yield more than another can gain from the most fruitful. Vast capacities may lie wholly unknown or unimproved. Very much depends on the mind that sees, and on the hand that executes. One man—one people, will take a garden and make a very desert of it, and another will take a desert and make a garden out of it. Now all God's people are under His culture. He has taken them in hand, very rough, very unpromising materials,—to see what He can make out of them. It was a very rugged, unpromising world that was given into the hands of man to cultivate, but ere the last trump shall sound, and the world is given over to its final fire, it will be a very finished world that will shine in the sunlight. These Christians may be all in the rough, but they are all uncut diamonds. The Eternal God has taken them in hand, He is at work upon them. He is showing what His almighty grace can and will do for them. We are God's workmanship, and each disciple will exhibit the skill of the Workman. So that we need have no apprehension that under such a hand as the Almighty's, such culture as His, even these now very imperfect Christians

will be an unworthy portion for our Heavenly Father to select out of earth. His skill is adequate to make them a portion that shall satisfy Him, for having made the earth and sent it on its errand. It will be found that it required just such a world, with just such a history, with just such opposing influences, to bring out and perfect just such a people and just such a portion.

“The Lord’s portion is His people.” If this be so, then we who hope we belong to, and are a part of that portion, have the most weighty obligations resting upon us. If we are His portion—a part of it, then there is a duty, a high duty of personal consecration, of personal culture, that even here and now, our souls may honor our Father. If we are God’s portion, we should see to it that the Divine Husbandman receives no reproach when an observer casts his eye upon us. It will bring honor to God if our gardens are well cared for—if our souls are all trimmed and well kept, if our hearts are the soil on which grow all the plants, the flowers and fruits of righteousness. No pressure of duty can be so great as this—that God has selected us as a part of His portion in this world.

But there is not only a duty within, in the culture and equipment of our own souls for all beauty and all righteousness, but also, if the Lord’s portion is His people, there is a duty of enlarging that portion by increasing the number of His people. The world is

full of trees—full of plants that ought to be growing in the garden of the Lord. We should go out, and bring them in. The world is full of people that ought to come and magnify the inheritance of the Almighty in the earth. We should earnestly strive to persuade them to come in, and thus increase the number that will swell the triumphs of grace. What an honor to be a part of the portion of the Almighty—to have the privilege of adding to that portion! We add to it, and we do a double work; we magnify the revenues of glory that will come from His portion to God, and we start a bliss that will brighten forever in the hearts of those that are brought in through us, to increase the heritage of God.

Are we of the number who belong to the people, and so to the portion of Jehovah? those for whom the world was made, and is kept? Do we belong to those whom God will bring safely off from all the disasters of time, to live forever in His own peaceful home with Him, or do we belong to those who in “the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds,” will go down amid the general ruin, having no place with His people, who alone are His portion?

NOTE.—Preached at Lewiston Falls, April 25, 1858, and at Springfield, June 20, 1858.

## IV.

### GOD'S OWNERSHIP IN MAN.

*And ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price.—*  
1 COR. vi. 19, 20.

**M**OST men act as though they were their own. They conduct their affairs, their whole style of life, as though they were. God affirms that they are not; and at this point, issue is joined, and men come into collision with God. It is not so much that men wish to live out of the range of the fundamental laws that God has inwrought into the system of things—it is not that they desire to live outside of the Divine protection and help, when these are convenient refuges in their helplessness; but here is the stress of their alienation—that they do wish to live as their own; and God, as much out of considerations of mercy as of absolute right, will not allow them so to act. Men say, practically—we are our own. God says—No! ye are mine.

The absolute proprietorship in man, in every man, God claims. There is, and can be, no exception to this law.

He claims our bodies. These are in the loosest relation to our veritable selves. These may be dropped, and yet we may remain in full and vigorous activity; and yet these are His. These hands and feet—these eyes and ears, avenues of the soul, through which it receives and gives out so much—these tongues, the glory of our frames—this whole physical structure, is His;—His, for He made it, and adjusted it so nicely, equipping it so admirably for service, fashioning it so delicately and yet so strongly, making it so noble, so alert, such a masterpiece of mechanism, as to excite the wonder of the thoughtful the more they think—this body is His.

These thoughts, that wander through Eternity, that dive into its depths, and soar to its heights, that dart quicker than an arrow's flight, yea, quicker than the electric currents—that are here, that are there, that are everywhere—that no power can imprison or chain—that are flying over ocean and land, while the body is bound in fetters—that are knocking at the portals of the morning, and crying for light, while tyrants are striving to wrap the soul in darkness—that astonish us at their swiftness, and often terrify us by their uncontrollableness; these thoughts are His—this thought-power, part of it known, infinitely more of it unknown, even to ourselves—this is all His.

The affections—the power to feel, to love, to hate,



to admire, to loathe, are His—linked inseverably with thought—thought and feeling—blended threads twisted by the hand of the Maker—these are God's. He claims these preëminently; these first and most, as being most central to us, and most precious to us and to Him. He strikes for these first; He knocks at their portal longest and loudest, and deems that He has nothing without these. He puts His imprint upon these most emphatically, and says of them—these are Mine.

These wills, in a sense the masters of our souls, lording it over them with imperial sway, seizing the helm, and tossing the vessel whither they will—these are His, not our own at all. They are constituted the legitimate vicegerents of God, the only real, effective ones in the earth, destined to reign, in freedom indeed, but yet under law—free, because under law; these wills, that so often rebel against him, that assume false leadership, that break over all Divine barriers, and roam away in very wantonness—are His—held of Him and under him—masters, because He has put them in sovereignty.

The whole man, from centre to circumference, from height to depth, the man known and the man unknown, the man developed and the man undeveloped; all that lies within these souls in germ, waiting other scenes, and other eyes, and other influences, to bring it out—all, all is God's. He stamps it His. He claims, and will claim it His. However deep and

radical its alienations; however distant its wanderings, it is His. Whatever powers ever get possession of man with or without his consent, they are despots, usurpers. No time, no eternity, can give them rightful possession of one faculty, one power of body or of soul. All thoughts, all imagination, all feeling, that is now away from God, is filched, stolen, held by fraud and violence. He may give them up, but it will be with a sigh; as Christ gave up Jerusalem—gazing upon it with painful, tearful utterance, “How often would I—but ye would not!” From first to last, all through time, all through eternity, this claim of God to us will be valid, capable by possibility of no alienation.

The grounds of this claim are threefold. First, Creation. He hath made us, and not we ourselves. This is the original ground of all rightful claim. Say of a thing, “I have made it,” and surely I may add, “it is mine.” No claim can be prior to this, none can strike deeper. In the highest sense—in a sense that we cannot assert with respect to anything we make, we may say of God, *He hath made us*. It takes a God to make even the poorest of us. He put no journeyman to make any of us. The man most meagre in thought, in imagination, in feeling, required the wisdom and power of God to construct him. The lowest man is a microcosm—an undeveloped angel. Get him once well awake, profoundly stirred, on the ascending grade, fairly front-

ing God and His creation ; put the Divine life and inspiration into him, and he is capable of drinking deep draughts of God. We do not know what a man is yet. The glory of a human soul has not yet dawned upon us. That delver in the ditch, when he gets fledged, and his wings grown, may fly into the empyrean—yea, from star to star. It doth not yet appear what he may be, and God who made him, doth not mean that it shall yet appear what he may be. This creature so wonderful, God made not for another, but for Himself. Divine ownership is involved in his very creation.

The second ground of ownership is Sustentation. God sustains us, not in a loose, general way ; not as we sustain beings who are related to us—not as a mother even sustains her infant, feeding it from the cup of her own life. We only fetch a feeble compass about the idea of Divine sustentation, by any analogies we draw from human relationships, and the supports we may give to those most dependent upon us. God penetrates us by His sustaining power, moment by moment. He undergirds us continually. His life circles through all our faculties. We live and move in Him. His hand withdrawn, we perish. In Him, we and all things stand, as the branches, the leaves, the flowers, the fruit, stand in the trunk. Some have called the support that God gives to His creatures, a continuous creation. It is not so, and yet probably

as much power is requisite to sustain, as to create. The being that lives continually in God—that perishes without Him, may well be called God's.

A third ground of ownership is Redemption. We are His, for as our text says, "We are bought with a price." It is presented here as the chief ground of ownership, as though creation were little, as though sustentation were little, and redemption were all. Ye are bought with a price, therefore ye are not yet your own. As if the original claim of God had been forfeited, and He had bought it back again; as though sin had alienated the original possession, and He had recovered it at a vast price. This price you know—it was the Life of His Son. I need not dwell upon it. A word made us; a Calvary bought us. Creation was painless; redemption was a torture. The price paid measures God's estimate of us. If we had been worth nothing to God, He would have paid nothing. We do not pay jewels for rubbish. We do not bring out all our gold, in exchange for trifles. Neither does God. He does not pay a life so dear to Him for souls that are insignificant. It is easy to find men's estimate of men; human souls are at a discount here. God paid Christ for them—the gold of His heart—the crown jewel of His realm—the Kohinoor of heaven. Stand at the Cross, and there God shows you and the angels His estimate of souls. That He might win them back, that He might have them

again, He paid that price; it is His most complete claim—His most strenuous plea. “Ye are not your own. Ye are bought, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” That is the climax of claim—that is the strenuous plea of ownership. Passing by creation, ignoring continued sustentation, He presents the purchase, and says, “Ye are Mine, all of you, for I have bought you all.”

The claim and the grounds of it have been considered.

I would now say that God acts, upon the basis of this claim, as though we were His, I mean as far as His action apart from ours is concerned. He deals with us very much as we deal with our own. He creates us as He pleases, gives us such endowments as He pleases, places us in positions without consulting us. We have nothing to do with our birth, our relationships, our condition in earlier life. Apart from prudence we have little to do with the term of our years. God spins the thread of our life strong or weak, long or short, as it may please Him. The impulses of life come mainly from Him. He consults us very little about many things that concern us most vitally. He is the Sovereign arbiter of our destiny to a considerable extent. In a word, He continually acts upon the assumption that we are His. He meets us with that claim in His Word, He enforces it in the

realm of Nature and of Providence. So far as we can discover His idea by His doings He treats us perpetually on the basis of that claim. He never intermits it. Whenever He comes in contact with us in the domain of Law He enforces it. I think no one can misapprehend the views of God in this matter as they are indicated in all His providential dealings with us. If a man is his own, he has a right to be consulted in a vast realm of interests over which God rules in absolute sovereignty;—if he belongs to another than God, then that other should be consulted. But God moves straight on, never consulting man, but treating him as though he were His, absolutely and entirely. He is always and everywhere expressing His claim upon men in the written and in the unwritten word.

But though God thus expresses and thus emphatically enforces and acts upon this claim, it is yet practically futile till we come into God's ideas on the matter, and joyfully and blissfully respond to His claim. God may act on one basis—we may act on another. God may say we are His and we may say we are our own. He may act upon His assumption—we may act upon our own. He is the greater and may crush us, but our wills within the limit of our own souls are free and may stand out against the divine omnipotence. Will is subject to moral influences, not to physical power. Power can call worlds into being, but it does not subdue wills. It is ours to

yield to the claim of God and respond yes! we are God's, body, soul and spirit—all His.

And a great part of God's discipline with us in this world is just to secure a joyful and permanent acquiescence on our part in this claim of God. I have said that He cannot compass His claim by mere power. Every creature of God is affected in its own way. God is in His creatures—all of them. None of them are out of His control. But He affects each after its own Law. Brute creation is moved in one way, moral intelligences in quite another way. The stars are moved in one way and run their courses by one law. Men are moved in quite another way and by another law. There is no opposition to the Divine claim and will in Nature—only in free responsible wills. God as much claims souls as He does stars; He owns the one as much as the other; but He makes good practically His claim to souls in quite a different method from what He does His claim to the stars. He governs matter as matter, but souls as souls.

If He can make souls willing in the day of His power, it is yet power of a different sort from that which is impressed upon dead matter. When He says, we are not our own but His, and then seeks to bring us to an acknowledgment of His claim, He will do it by processes which do not violate the integrity and freedom of souls. In ways to us unknown

perhaps, in ways, however, conformable to the nature of the creature He is treating, He operates to bring us to the acknowledgment of His right in and over us. He plants the claim in His word—He reiterates it in His Providence, and then by a more or less severe discipline, strives to make us acquiesce in His right to us. The process may be circuitous, the methods may be stern, the discipline long and terrible, which shall bring us gladly to confess and act upon the confession that we are not our own, but God's, bought with a price so precious.

The conflict between us and God ceases whenever we are brought to agree with God upon this point of ownership. So long as we say we are our own the conflict must last; when we yield and say, no, we are not our own but God's, it is over, and over forever. And when we once yield and come into a blessed harmony with God on this subject, we bless the methods, however severe, that brought us there. Better anything, we feel, than a difference with God on such a point.

And yielding on the main point, we yield on every subordinate point. When the central citadel is carried everything is carried. When we say we are not our own, we say that everything we possess is not our own. The man who yields himself yields everything with himself—his property, his learning, his all. The greater includes the less. The great surrender implies



the surrender of all that attaches to us. We give up all when we give up ourselves. God aims at *us*, not primarily at ours. When He gains us He well knows that He gains ours.

Neither let any suppose that we lose aught that an ingenuous soul would desire to possess, when we say Amen to God's claim of ownership. Man owns us and we are slaves; we lose our crown, we are fallen, degraded, imbruted. We are only free when we come into the possession of God. Till then we are bond-servants—free ever after. We lose ourselves in God. When we allow God to call us His, then He allows us to call Him ours. He gains a creature and we gain a Creator. He gains a lost sinner, and we gain a Redeeming Saviour and an Eternal Father and Friend.

NOTE.—(North Church, April, 1860.)

## V.

### ONE WAY OF SALVATION.

*Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*—ACTS iv. 12.

THERE is salvation for the lost in Christ. This, though not stated, is plainly implied in this passage. Apart from Christ there is no salvation; this is palpably, positively affirmed. The resources of the language would fail to supply terms that would or could exhibit more clearly the exclusiveness of the one method of salvation by Christ. Under the broad cope of the heavens no other name is revealed to men whereby they can be saved. They are shut up unto Him. High walls hem them in, and there is but one outlet. The Gospel makes known Christ as the way of salvation. It makes known no other. The man who proclaims any other, not only goes out of the record, but contradicts it; not only speaks without authority, but against all authority.

It is not my purpose to follow the implication of the Text—that there is salvation for us in Christ,—

but the spirit and positive declaration of the passage, that there is no salvation in any other.

You will mark well that I am not about to discuss the question, how much or how little knowledge of Christ, how clear and definite, or how confused and indefinite conceptions of Him one must or may have in order to be saved. That is an open question—probably it is wholly an insoluble one, at least by man.

But this I say, that whoever out of our lost race is saved and brought home to Heaven, is saved by Christ alone. He may know much or little of Christ, have this or that conception of Him ; but when he is saved, when he does come to Heaven, he will see and confess that it is Christ only who has brought him there.

Neither am I about to attempt to prove that there is salvation in no other. Our text says so definitely, unmistakably ; and it is not for man to go about to prove what God affirms,—not for man to bolster up with his weak logic the positive testimony of the Eternal Jehovah. This would be to hold a taper-light to the sun. When you get down to a fair and square statement of the Bible, you get down upon the solidest thing in God's creation. If you cannot build on that, you cannot on anything. I have no business here,—this pulpit, this house, these worshippers, this Sabbath—these solemn assemblies have no significance

if the Bible is not of God, and conveys not His mind to man. If an accountant has to go through the process of verifying his ready-reckoner every time he wants to cast interest on a note, he might as well cast his ready-reckoner into the streets; and if every time the Bible makes a statement, we must go beyond it and undertake to shore it up and prove it true by outside considerations; we might as well hurl our Bible into the streets and rely upon our own reason.

The Bible says that Christ's name is the only name given under heaven among men for their salvation. That is plain, I think, and it will be authoritative and decisive with all those to whom the Bible is so. The fact however being regarded as proved by the unmistakable declaration of the Text, there are yet external and corroborative considerations moving in the same line, and confirming the same conclusion, and on these we will briefly dwell.

And I would observe first, that if the Bible presents Christ as God's method of salvation at all, we should presume that it would be His exclusive method. It would be like God to anticipate this of Him, like His workings in other departments of His empire. We find God to be a God of order everywhere, not doing things in a loose and dishevelled way in any department, not allowing us to presume for a moment that we can deal with Him as we list, that we can carve our own way to a desired object or end, not

mind His way at all. We find that He holds us to fixed terms and ways, to orderly courses in everything. He will have nothing to do with us in any wild, irregular methods we may choose to adopt. We come against Him, we war with Him when we attempt so to act. We must study Him, find out His ways, get into line, and move in straight courses, and then we find that God will meet us, and work with us, and help us on to our end. Given a definite goal and object, there is a Divinely devised way to it, and we must follow it or we shall never reach it. If one would cultivate his mind, win earthly good, reach heights of fortune or fame, there must be a method to his workings. The stars in their courses fight against one when he crosses their path. A man off the track is as helpless and as useless as an engine off the track. The dealings of God in all departments would lead us to the anticipation that if He has devised and revealed one way of salvation,—if He has given one name, that He would give no other. God is not the author of confusion in any sphere, much less in the highest, the spiritual sphere. It would be against all the analogies of nature, against all the operations of Jehovah in other departments to presume for a moment that it made no special difference with Him whether we took His way to secure salvation, or some other way, or no way at all. If He has originated a way and revealed it, all the presumptions are that He will hold us to it,

not allowing us to cross it, and run counter to it in stern opposition, or in wild and loose thoughtlessness and indifference. Depend upon it, if Christ is God's way at all, it will be His one way, His only way of saving man.

Secondly : If Christ is God's way of saving men, we should presume that His regard for His son, and for all that He has done to secure human salvation, would permit Him to allow no competitor with this method of salvation. It is assumed here that Christ is *a* way of salvation, a way devised in Heaven, in the counsels of eternity, revealed in due time on the earth. If He is *a* way and the exclusive way, then He will forever maintain His own pre-ëminence, rising far aloft, standing in isolated and conspicuous grandeur, without a rival or competitor ; but if He is only one way among others, then He has competitors ; He does not occupy a position of conspicuous grandeur. Lift other methods of saving men into sight, allow that though Christ is one way of salvation, He is not the exclusive one, and then by so much as you give prominence or even possibility to other methods, you diminish the value of Christ as a way. If God allows other methods, He is allowing them to come into competition with the method by His Son, and by so much He is diminishing the value of His Son's method. He cannot exalt others without diminishing this. If Christ is one way, and there be more or less other

ways, then it matters not so much whether men believe in Jesus.

The Everlasting Father either means that His Son shall be the exclusive way of salvation, or not. If He does, He exalts Him ; if not, He disparages Him. If He allows rivals, He exalts those rivals. It is utterly impossible that Christ shall maintain His position as a Saviour, if the Father allows others to be Saviours also. If men need not go to Heaven by the Cross, but by some other way, then the cross may become an old, worn, unused way ; the grass may grow over it, the winds may sigh a mournful requiem over its desertion, no footfall of a traveller may cheer it, heaven may be filled through other avenues, and other songs than those of praise to the Lamb may echo through the arches of the upper Temple. There can be no way of salvation elevated into competition with the way by Christ, without disparaging Christ. Is it presumable that the Father will erect any Saviour, one or many, into competition with His Son ?

Thirdly : On the simple principle of economy, we should anticipate that salvation by Christ—if a way at all—would be the exclusive way. Profusion is indeed a characteristic of the Divine doings. There is seemingly a superfluity of beauty and grandeur in the works of God. But while this is true, it is no less true that there is a wise economy. God never makes one thing do the work of another. In that widest field

of beauty—the flowers—He does not make a rose to hide the violet or to fulfil its function. The beauty of the rose is not the beauty of the violet. In greater things, God does not create one river, one lake, one ocean, one continent, to fulfil the office of another. He does not make one sun to do the work of another. Things do not overlap or run together, or perform each other's tasks, so that anything that God has made is useless, being crowded out and made so by something else.

Looked at closely, there is economy in all the works of God. We should expect this when we come to the spiritual realm—profusion, exuberance, no waste, but wise and glorious economy.

God has given under Heaven one name among men, whereby they may be saved; it is a good name, it is an all-sufficient name, it is fully adequate to the purposes for which it is given—a name high in the Heavens, a name without a rival. And why should we anticipate, now that the Father has provided and named Him as the Saviour, that He would provide and name another to do the same work, fulfil the same function, stand in the same relation? What economy in providing Him, and then providing another? Is it like God to do so? Is our God a God of wild extravagance? Can He even make Saviours so many, that they should rival each other? Would He have summoned His Son in wild wastefulness to come to earth,



take on Him our nature, endure reproaches, suffer and die to provide a way of salvation, when a simple word of His could create other Saviours, that without any such discipline or any such suffering would do just as well or nearly as well as He? If Christ is not the exclusive Saviour, then other Saviours could be made without the cross, and the cross is all an idle waste. If all that Christ endured from the cradle to the grave, was and is requisite to fit Him for a Saviour, then there is no waste—there is a wise economy ; but if it was not necessary, if there are other Saviours,—made such of the Father without any suffering, or any cross and death, then the provision of such a Saviour, in such a way for man, is an idle extravagance. It was tossing ocean into tempest, to waft a feather ; it was enacting an awful drama with a tragic end, that might have been spared.

Fourthly : It is desirable that we should have some one name, some clear and definite way of salvation, when men—lost men—ask us how they are to be saved. It is desirable that the Bible should clearly indicate some way, some one way ; and that Christian men and ministers should be able to point it out to others clearly, definitely, so that they shall see it. Indeed, if men are lost, and if the Bible reveals a way of salvation, its chief value consists in the clearness and definiteness with which it makes known that way, and enables us to make it known to others.

I know of nothing that would be so adapted to cast suspicion upon the Bible, as to have it come to us with a revelation of many ways, as though one were as good as another ; or with an indefinite, hazy presentation of the one way. That the Bible is clear and pointed ; that it does not go off in loose, disjointed statements on the great theme of human salvation, but concentrates its light on the one point ; that it holds men to one exclusive salvation, making it as clear as though ten thousand suns were shining upon it, is a proof that it comes from God. There is no looseness about the Bible on this point, no diversity of statement, no letting men off with the idea that they may do this or that or a thousand things to be saved—one thing being about as important as another, one way about as well as another. It holds up Christ, and Christ alone, as the Saviour. Christ is its Alpha and Omega. It presents no other name. It affirms that there is no other. It does not palter and equivocate, and double and turn on its track. It faces the question : how shall man be saved ? It makes *us* face it ; it answers it with the clearness and force of a trumpet.

This, I say, is desirable. Standing on the Bible, speaking from it, we want to be able to give men a definite answer to the one question, "What must I do to be saved ?" We want to give an answer that will have the precision and clearness, and decisiveness

of an answer to a mathematical problem. The Christian man or minister who is not prepared to answer that question, has no function in this world. We do not want to say, or be compelled to say, that the Bible gives an uncertain response to this question. When men are running for their lives, and they ask us the path of safety—for a refuge that shall house them, we do not want to be in the dark, or be compelled to speak vaguely. We want to say, “*There is the way—yonder is the refuge.*” When men are in earnest to secure salvation, they want no loose, dishevelled answers. They know that they are dealing with a God who will hold them to terms, and they want to *know* what they are. We say, Christ is the Saviour. He, and He only, is the Way. He, the Refuge.

If the text be true—if our comments on it are true, then I would remark, in conclusion, that his is the most broad, the most charitable spirit, that holds men to the strict, definite method of salvation presented in the Gospel. There is no charity in going outside of the Bible for a reply to that question, “What must I do to be saved?” There is no true mental breadth in giving another or broader answer to it than the Bible gives.

We do not regard a physician as very broad and catholic, who says to a patient, “Do this or that, it matters little what.” The broad-minded physician is one who knows nature’s laws, and holds

his patient rigidly to them, and says, "You will recover in this way, and not in that." So with the lawyer, so with all men. Ask any man in his special profession, what you must do in a particular exigency, and you expect some definite reply, and value your teacher as he gives you one. So when you ask that greatest of all questions that ever agitates the human soul, "How shall I be saved?"—when you grow earnest about it, you will feel that he is the truest and most charitable man who has some definite response to give, and not he who sends you over all creation to do some hazy thing, or series of things, as though one were as good as another.

Verily, terms have got new definitions. Looseness is charity. Definiteness, strictness, is bigotry. But in spite of all our ideas and definitions, God and His kingdom will go on their way. We are lost men outside of that kingdom. There is a way into it—Jesus Christ. There is a name, *one* name given whereby we can be saved. That name is Jesus. I know of no other. There has come from the sweet heavens over us, no other. It is enough. We need no other.

## VI.

### FAITH ROOTED IN DARKNESS.

*And he went out, not knowing whither he went.—HEB. xi. 8.*

**A** BRAHAM was a true man, and therefore must have loved the place of his birth, the scenes where his young feelings grew, his kindred, and his early associates. He had grown to mature life among these scenes and these friends, and his roots must have struck deep and wide when he received the summons from God to depart. He was to leave his native country, and go out to a land of which God should tell him in due time. There were promises made of future good, of a seed that should be as the stars of the heavens. In him all the families of the earth should be blessed. As men regarded him, as they blessed or cursed him, so should they be blessed or cursed. He had these assurances, and, resting on them, at the word of Jehovah he rends old ties, turns his back on old sights, and forsakes those who will not be persuaded to heed the same voice, and follow his fortunes. The commendations bestowed upon Abraham so copiously, are based

upon this simple, childlike obedience to the Divine word, and this unwavering confidence in the Divine promises. He asked no vouchers from God ; no pledges apart from His word, for the fulfilment of His word. He staked his all on the truthfulness of the simple assertion of his Maker. He was willing to stand or fall, live or die, on that. If that failed him, then he might perish, but with him would perish the solid earth and the pillared heavens. He grasped the word, he held it, and trusting to it, left his home and went out, not knowing whither he went.

This course of procedure on the part of Abraham, seems at times to us a strange one ; an isolated case, standing out there in the dawn of the world's history, drawing to itself a whole cluster of eyes and hearts, winning the world's eulogies for its novelty, and its oriental simplicity and beauty. In its mere circumstances and appendages, in the simple vesture or setting of the act, it is strange, and so wondrously attractive. But in its interior meaning, in its exemplary force, it is not at all strange. Abraham, in this initial act of his historic life, in that section of it that stands out in Divine illumination, is mainly interesting to us, not as placing himself out of the reach of our sympathy, not as doing some romantic service that stirs only the romantic elements in our nature, not as passing out of the beat and circuit of our thought and apprehension, but as coming within the

range of our sympathy, and as placing before us an example which we, in our modern time, and in our humble life, may and should imitate.

Substantially, we are summoned here, where we are, now in the time in which we live, to do the same thing; and the force of Abraham's life, and especially this initial act of his life upon us, centres just here, that it should prompt us to do the same thing.

We are to go forth.

We are to do it under the power of the simple principle, faith.

Like him we are to go forth, not knowing whither we go.

1. We are to go forth, not physically, perhaps, as did Abraham; not out of our city, or town, or locality, into another; not out of our native land into a foreign land. We may not be summoned to leave these scenes that we have gazed on so long, these friends that have knit themselves so firmly to us, these stars that have shone upon us from our infancy, these waters that have danced their own joyousness into our souls, to look upon other lands and other skies, and dwell among strange people. There may be no summons of this sort from the highest heavens, to go forth from the homes of our fathers; but there is a summons to go forth into the regions of new thoughts, new purposes, new feelings and plans, new aspirations, new hopes and desires—in a word, into a

new life, a life that shall have other springs and other nutriment than we can derive from our old haunts and our old associations. Not more surely and tenaciously did Abraham cling to the wonted scenes and friendships of his early home, than do we cling to the scenes, the friendships, the hopes and objects of our present life. We are of the earth, earthy. Our thoughts, feelings, wishes, circle within its domain. We may be excursive beings; we may love to roam, to look upon new lands, new customs, new arts, but it is within the well-marked enclosure of earth. We love it, we yearn for it, we cling to it. Always our first life is simply the natural life into which our birth introduces us. Among its objects we move, among its interests we are quickened; its ambitions stir us, its sympathies affect us, its beauties appeal to our æsthetic natures. Within its sphere we act, all that belongs to it belongs to us. Thought, affection, volition, all within us that it in its broad field of interest can excite, is excited. We become as ample, as cultured, as tender, as affectionate, as it can make us. But when it has done all for us, when it has touched us at every point at which it can touch us, when it has exhausted upon us its last appeal, we are as yet only stirred upon the surface of our nature. There are deeper elements that it cannot touch, there are strings that it cannot make to vibrate. The soul was made for earth, but not for earth alone.



It was made to be educated by it, but not by it alone. It must while yet a denizen of earth, arise and go out of earth, it must break through the simply natural into the spiritual for which it was preëminently made, and where emphatically is the theatre of its activities, and its aspirations and hopes. It must heed the voices that come to it from thence. It must be awake to the objects that lie within the infinite scope of the spiritual realm. It must be stirred by its fears, be incited by its hopes, be moved by its beauties.

We naturally love to settle down in our own familiar clime, within the settled order of our simply natural emotions and feelings and volitions. We are conservative of the earthly, and have appetencies for it. The spiritual is out of our beat, out of the range of our sympathies; it is a foreign region to us. We cling to the old and familiar. But the voice comes, "Up! arise! get you out from this place!" We must be born again; born into the spiritual as we have been born into the natural. We must be roused to see and feel the fact that the spiritual world is a reality; that it is no mere dim and shadowy and uncertain thing; that it is substantial; that it is for us; that we must enter consciously into it, come into it as really as we come into this world, and that we shall only come into our true home, our true hopes and friendships, when we come into it. We must do this,

for earth cannot nourish a true life. We starve, we die, our faculties spend themselves clinging to it. We must arise and go forth.

2. We must thus go forth under the guidance of the same principle that governed Abraham—faith in God's word. Canaan, or rather that unknown land into which Abraham was summoned to go, was his spiritual world. He had not traversed it, he knew not of its existence by any sight of his own eye, or by any surveys of his countrymen. It was a region whose existence was as unproved by human investigations, as the spiritual realm is by our natural eye. There was an unknown land ; God said so, and summoned him to go out into it, and he went. It had the effect on him, the spiritual effect that it has on us, when summoning up our affections, we send them to plant themselves in the spiritual world, the world of God, of angels, and of all that are born of God. We know there is a spiritual world, because God has told us there is. We have not discovered it. No Columbus has sailed athwart the billowy sea that parts us from it, and brought it to light, and come back with strange stories of its tropical grandeurs, and strange specimens of its unknown dwellers. No telescope has been plied in the heavens. No Herschel has stolen out of the firmament the secret of its existence, and brought the evidences of its grandeurs. No. We know it because God has told us so. We have

suggestions of it indeed in our own souls—in the overplus of power within us, in the surplusage of aspiration that earth cannot absorb, in faculties that lie unused if earth and time be all. But it is nothing more than conjecture with us. It becomes a reality when we stand in God's light—in other words, when we credit His word, when we believe. It is Faith that opens up to us that vast domain, the spiritual realm; faith that makes it a bright and glorious world; faith that crowds it with lofty and burnished intelligences; faith that fills it with objects of grandeur, that puts the torch to our dead affections, and makes them glow with love toward it; faith that incites our wills that hitherto chose the earthly, to choose and prosecute the spiritual, the heavenly, the divine. It is no new principle that starts us on this divine errand, this journey out of the known and familiar into the unknown and unfamiliar; out of the old and settled order of wonted earthly feelings, into a new and higher order of celestial feelings; it is the same old principle that started Abraham out of his old home, and from his old associates in Ur of the Chaldees, to go into that unknown country of which God had told him, and which in good time He would show him. Faith is the substance of things unseen to us, and under its sure, its intelligent guidance, we go forth to the spiritual, to find a home and take ventures in it, to gather up treasures there, to make its

dwellers our friends, and its objects our objects of supreme regard.

3. And when we thus go forth in affection to the spiritual, under the direction of a simple faith, we resemble the Father of all believers in this particular—we know not whither we go. I do not mean now, that we have no intelligent conception of the land whither as pilgrims we journey, that eye hath not seen its beauties, nor ear heard its sounds of harmony, nor heart conceived the elements of its bliss. However true it may be that, when we go forth into the domain of the spiritual, we do not know specifically and definitely what we shall come to in it, that is not the truth on which I wish to dwell now. It is this, rather: that when we commit ourselves to the guidance of faith in God, and go forth to meet God in His own home and in our home, we do not know what we shall meet on the road; we know not what precise paths will be opened up for us to traverse, under the direction of our faith. We believe all that God has said about earth and time, about heaven and hell, about eternity and its awful realities. We believe that we may be, and are, the children of God, and through Christ, may come into our heritage; we go forth into earth, into life, under the dominant power of this simple faith; and when we do so, we do not know what will happen to us, into what new positions, new associations, new responsibilities, new

trials, new difficulties, new agonies, we may come. In this respect we are like Abraham ; we go forth, not knowing whither we go. We commit ourselves to the keeping of a new principle, a new and vital force, a new Director, and we know not where, in the interval between the hour when we commit ourselves to it, and the hour when it shall land us in Heaven, it will carry us.

And in this respect it is like every principle, every deep and dominant affection of our souls. When we cherish any masterly love, when we yield to any masterly principle, we do not know where it will carry us, and this is the case whether the love, the principle, be good or bad. When a youth yields himself to an associate, he knows not where he will carry him. When an overmastering passion bursts up in his soul, and sweeps away the barriers of conscience and early instruction, he knows not to what it will bring him. When he looks upon the wine when it is red, and lifts it with many a tremor to his lips, he knows not where it will land him. When a young woman yields to an all-controlling vanity, and resolves at every hazard to trick her frail body for show, she knows not whither it will hurry her, through what vortices of passion, what declivities of woe, sloping to perdition. It is all unknown. Under the guidance of an evil passion, a principle, an appetite, the youth goes forth not knowing whither he goes.

And, on the other hand, when one commits himself to the mastery of a pure affection, a divine principle, he knows not whither it will lead him, through what scenes of joy or suffering, life or death. A man takes the woman of his love to his new home; he loves her as man should love. Veiled to him are the dark portals of the coming years. He knows not what tears he will weep, or what smiles will play upon his cheek as the result of his love. A mother bears a child. His very birth brings her tortures that she dreamed not of, and which her mighty affection for husband and child could alone enable her to bear. She has come under the power of a new feeling, and she knows not whither it will herald her. The child has her peace or woe in his keeping. He may climb to holiness, and joy irradiates her soul; he may rush to ruin, and her soul becomes a spring of bitterness.

A man loves his country, and that love bears him from wife, and children, and home, to the tented field, to the raging battle; and, as the result of it, he may sigh years away in agony, or his body may sleep its last sleep amid the heaped trenches of the promiscuous dead on the field of his glory. It is the very element of power in our affections and our principles, that when we once give ourselves up to them, they become our masters, and carve paths for us that we dreamed not of. It is so with our simply earthly af-

fections and principles ; it is emphatically so with those of a higher order, those that connect us with God, with His kingdom, His friends, with our own spiritual heritage.

Abraham believed, and committing himself to his faith, he went out, not knowing whither he went. It was one feature of his faith, that he should not know. If he had known he would not have believed. If the spiritual world were mapped out to us like our native village, it could hardly be said that we believe. Faith strikes its roots into darkness. Take up its roots to examine them, and it would be like unearthing the roots of a tree to examine them. It would die.

We must go forth under the control of faith into darkness, not knowing whither we go. When we have once said that we will believe the word of God, that we will commit ourselves to the guidance of faith, we do so if we act intelligently, under the full conviction that we are utterly ignorant what will come of it in the interval between the hour when we believe, and the hour of our salvation. A life of faith is a life all in the dark to us. We are to make no compromises, no covenants with ease. We must seek no assurance of a smooth time, an easy passage, large possessions, troops of friends, firm health, fine houses. Our faith *may* bring us to these ; it will very likely carry us clear away from them. We are not

to form any compact with our faith, that we are to have these as the result of our faith. We are to commit ourselves to faith in God, faith in the invisible, faith in eternal realities, to a whole earthly life of faith, and then follow where our faith leads. It may be, into fair fields and down sunny slopes; it may be, up rough acclivities, and through dense forests; the one thing for us is, that we follow whither it guides; that we believe, and then take what comes of our faith. The sublime height of faith is reached when we cherish a calm indifference, a holy heedlessness where it will carry us in the interim, if it carries us into the presence of God, and the home of the good, at last.

Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went, not over-anxious what lot should be his, whether he should have a settled habitation, and gather all the sweet accompaniments of a home around him, or whether he should dwell in tents, and pitch or strike them as the Divine word should command. To us has come the word, "This world is not your home. Set not your affections on it. There is a City above, there is a World of light and purity. Go forth, go forth under the simple power and guidance of faith! You know not to what earthly trials your faith will bring you,



what Sunderings of friendships, what forsaking of what you hold dear, what losses and crosses, what smiles, what groans—but believe, go forth, commit yourself to faith, and receive all that follows from it!” This summons comes to you as to Abraham. Will you, like him, heed it, and go forth?

## VII.

### SEEKING ETERNAL THINGS.

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.—COLOSSIANS iii. 1.*

AS Christ died on the Cross *for* sin, so His people die *to* sin. As He rose triumphant from the dark, cold grave, so they rise to a new spiritual life in Him. Now the Apostle would say, that as Christ after His resurrection went up to mingle again in heavenly things; so those who have risen from the death, the grave of sin—for sin is nothing but the soul's death and entombment—are to seek those things which are above, where Christ is, and where too, He occupies the position of honor and power, at the right hand of God.

*If* ye be risen with Christ. The Apostle makes the seeking of the things above contingent upon this rising with Christ. He expects those only who are dead to sin—who have risen to a new and divine life, to seek the things above.

Others who are dead *in* sin cannot be expected to do it. They have the tastes, the desires, the

aspirations only which earth and sin give. This world limits their vision. All the ends they aim at are bounded by earth. The sky shuts down close around them. They mind—they seek earthly things. But those who are risen with Christ, who have awakened to a new life, to nobler desires and aptitudes—those are to seek the things above, for Christ their Saviour and Redeemer, the object of their love and confidence is there, and there too in no ignoble position; having not where to lay His head on earth, He is at the right hand of God in heaven.

It is regarded by Paul as encouragement and motive enough for those who are risen to a new life in and with Christ, to seek the things above, simply because Christ is there. Christ is at the right hand of God, in heaven—this is the encouragement, and the impulse too. He is enough to make the things above attractive to you. He takes away the shadowyness, the dimness from these things, for He is their centre. He gives them substantiality. He gives them “a local habitation and a name.” All lost in cloud before, Christ gives outline, reality, to them now. To the soul stirred with the desires of a spiritual life, that owes its origin and support to Christ, there is needed nothing else to throw attractiveness around the things above, than the simple fact that Christ is there among them, and the greatest of all, giving tone and character to all the rest. The soul that has its life in Christ,

looks to Christ, to the place, the scenes where He is, and seeks them from that consideration first and most. It adds the highest attractive power to the things above, that He is a part, and the chief part of them; and as He is the greatest attraction among them, so is the fact that He is at the right hand of God, the greatest encouragement to seek them; for one located in such a place of power will send forth aids to him who would seek them earnestly.

“Seek those things which are above.” Those *things*. The Apostle does not specify them. It would have been difficult for him to do so. They are too great, too grand to allow this, and so he unites them all together, and pours them into that very expansive mould, things. I know not of a more convenient term in the language. Scriptural writers often have to use it. When they cannot clasp the objects they wish to present with any other girdle, they throw this around them—they call them things. All persons, all interests, all objects, looming up, stretching away, lightening, darkening, embraced by the expanding soul, and then lost as too vast to be embraced—covering time—reaching out to and over eternity, are presented by an all-encompassing term—things. The *things* that are above. What the Apostle has not attempted to resolve into its elements, we will not attempt. We will leave the single term, with all its

convenient indefiniteness and expansiveness, to make its own impression.

*Seek* the things above. We may seek them before we reach them ; seek them as the pledge that we shall ultimately reach them, for no expectation of attaining them can be valid, which is not fostered by our seeking them. Show me the man who is earnestly bent on seeking the things that are above, and he will be the man that I shall regard as alone likely to obtain ; for it is true that he that seeketh and he only, shall find.

What we seek, determines our predominant tastes and desires. We seek that which we have a mind to, unless, indeed, we have come to the conclusion that we shall seek in vain—that the way to it is quite blocked up—the doors all closed. Let the avenues be all open, the object apparently attainable by the efforts we can put forth, and then, what we seek, will determine our tastes and characters. If we seek the things below on the earth, this will settle it that we are earthly ; if we seek the things above, this will decide that we are heavenly, that we are risen with Christ. The things above are the things amid which Christ is, and the bonds that bind us to Him, will bind us also to those, for they are like Him—are homogeneous with Him—accordant with His tastes and feelings. He, we may be sure, would not desire things that were ignoble and mean, and choose them

as His portion. What He chooses, it will be very safe for us to choose. The things that He deems adequate for Him, we shall do well to regard as best adapted to us. He is among the things above, and knows them and loves them, and would have us know and love them too.

One of the main wishes of Christ with respect to us, is that we should be weaned from earth and earthly things. He would not have us set our affections on them. We are to stay here but a little while, and He would not have us attemper our affections to the things which are to be so evanescent to us. He would not have us strike our roots into the things from which they are to be speedily plucked. And besides, He would not have us, even if we were to stay long with them, become homogeneous with them. But He would wean our affections from earth in some practicable, what we may call a philosophical way. He knows very well that we are loving beings, that we have our affections out ready to clasp something. He knows that we cannot be happy with vacant hearts—with no predominant object of affection. The whole history of the race teaches it, and our own souls, so often full of unrest, declare it. We must have something to love. These tendrils of the heart must be out, feeling after and grasping something. Out of itself the heart goes, and must go, or else it turns in, like the scorpion environed by fire, and

stings itself to death. The heart left vacant—swept of all occupants—untenanted, is the seat of all woe. It cannot remain so. A total wreck of the soul, or something to seek—to love—to interest and occupy it, is the alternative. A heart unoccupied will be like a house unoccupied ; all foul and dolorous things will fill it. The owl will hoot there. The satyr will dance there. The birds of night will cry there. It invokes ruin, and will rush to ruin. Better that earth fill the heart, better that it have its tendrils out to entwine what it can see here below, than that it have nothing.

Earth is a poor thing to give the heart up to, but poor as it is, it had better give itself to earth than to nothing. I would not take hold of the heart-strings that had wound around the lowest and meanest objects here, and untwine them, if I had nothing better to hold on to them. I would not go to the man who was blowing soap-bubbles like a child for occupation, and seek to stop him, if I should leave him with nothing to do. Better let him blow his bubbles. I would not approach a man loving an insect, as some lonely prisoners have done, feeding and nourishing it, and snatch away his insect, if I could not give him something better. I would not say to a man who was coming down from his imperial heights—casting aside his manly crown, and contentedly brooding and gloating over a single dollar, amusing and delighting him-

self with its brightness, and making it even a god, if all that I could do for him would be to tell him that he was doating upon a shining nothing. No. If his ignorance was his bliss, I would not make him wise. The miser grasping his bag of gold is not the most miserable of men,—not half so miserable as he who cannot sink so low as to love it, and yet has nothing else to love. The miser, even in loving something, though it be an ignoble something, indicates that he is nobly born. We would wean no man from earth, and what he might love on the earth, if we were to leave him with a heart wrenched from its former objects, and not drawn to something higher. It is only as we have the things above to hold out to him, that we would seek to draw away the affections that were exhausting their energies upon things below. We would not stand by the man who is sending his roots deeper and deeper into the earth, and with the spirit of a warning Cassandra, tell him that the earth was to be burned up, if we could not point him to a soil in which he might strike his roots and draw succulence, and grow and bloom forever and ever. No. It is only because we have actual, substantial things above—things more congenial with the soul in its normal, healthy state—more permanent—more ennobling—more satisfying—better fitted to give it an eternal uplift and expansion, that we come to any man and say, “set not your affections on things on the earth!”



We should only torment men before their time if we had no things above to show.

But now, when we stand beside you, and solicit your attention, and with an impassioned earnestness strive to assure you that all which you love that is simply of the earth cannot satisfy,—that poor would be the possessor of a world if he had it alone, we would give force to our appeal, by pointing you to things above, and saying *seek those*. Something you must, will, and should seek, for you are a desirous, seeking, grasping creature; but in seeking, seek the lasting and the best, seek that which is consonant with your nature, which will fill it, and more than fill it; something which a few flitting years will not take you from, but rather take you to, and that something is above where Christ your best Friend is in His place of honor. These things above you may not believe in. You may say that they are things of fancy—that they are a cloud-land, dim, uncertain,—that of the earth you are sure,—that its prizes are those of the senses,—that money is a certain good,—that it will bring money's worth, and that is almost everything,—that you will seek, and if possible, make sure of the present and seen good, not risk it for a remote and unseen good;—in a word, that you prefer to seize what you know, and not go on a restless crusade after what you do not know. Well, you can do this, if so it pleases you. In the very nature of things, the things above cannot

authenticate themselves to your mind by assuming shape and presenting themselves to your bodily senses. They would no longer be things above if they did that. They would be things of the earth. The things above *must* be invisible. If you require the demonstrations of sight, you are not the man whom they will consent to gratify. No man but Thomas would ever dare to make his belief in a risen Saviour dependent upon seeing Him, and thrusting his fingers into the print of the nails. Christ will not submit to dictation in that way. Neither will the things above come down to the things below, that we may believe them, if indeed the very idea of belief would not be destroyed by such demonstrations. If we seek things above, we must do it with the laws appertaining to those things in full force, and one of these laws is that they shall be invisible, and so objects of faith. If we believe not, this alters nothing. There they are.

And let us not suppose that by choosing to seek what we call a certainty, instead of an uncertainty, the substantial good things of earth, instead of the shadowy good things above, that we shall be as likely to come to them when life is all spent, as if we had sought them with devout earnestness all our days. It would be but a sorry and ineffective motive to present to a soul immersed in earthly things, loving them, seeking them, if you wished to wean it from such pursuits, and induce it to seek things above,—that in

a few passing years it would make little or no difference, that in due course the revolving earth would bring us all to the things above, when we shall seek them in due time. Would not such an one say, that he would then try both—if possible make sure of both,—that while amid the earthly things he would seek and enjoy them, and when he came to things above, he would seek and enjoy them? Could men be induced to seek things above in this way? Are the things above so yielding, so accommodating, as to consent to wait? Is there to be no assimilation of the soul while on earth for those things if it would enjoy them? If there is not, I have mistaken the whole economy of God's kingdom. If I understand this economy, the soul that seeks the things above, will alone come into possession of them, will alone become fitted to enjoy them. The soul that refuses to believe in these things, or believing in them, still prefers earthly things to them, will not be as likely to find them. The soul that is risen with Christ will seek those things that are above, for Christ is there to give order, consistence, beauty, and an ever powerful attraction to them.

## VIII.

### VALUE OF THOUGHT ON INVISIBLE THINGS.

*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.—*

2 Cor. iv. 18.

FROM this passage I design to speak of the importance of thought directed to invisible and eternal things. There are such things, real, substantial, existing as surely as those which we see and handle. They are for us—meant to attract us, to arrest, quicken, and hold our minds. We injure and wrong ourselves when we ignore or neglect them. We were not made to be absorbed in the seen and temporal. We have faculties which we never use when we are so. A portion of our nature lies wholly unexercised when we fail to think of the invisible and eternal. We were made to skirt the boundaries of the vast empire of the unseen, to make excursions into it, to enrich our natures by the spiritual wealth it contains, and which we may draw from it.

There are indeed mighty attractions toward visi-

ble and temporal things. These lie before and around us, are clamorous and exacting, and cannot be made readily to leave any part of us disengaged for excursions beyond their domain. They have the advantage in many respects over the unseen and eternal, and they claim and get a large portion of the race. But then we were made to be free—to select wisely our objects of thought—to decide what objects single or in clusters should draw and hold us—to choose which should shape our entire being most:—the seen or unseen, the temporal or eternal. We can by effort send our minds out into the invisible; and we can yield to circumstance and be the slave of the visible. Here are the two realms: the one lying all around us filled with objects subject to our senses; the other lying beyond the reach of our senses, but real and substantial, subject to our quickened thought, into whose very darkness the soul may flash its far-darting imaginations, to light it up and make it attractive. We were made for both these domains—for a life here in the visible, and a life yonder in the invisible. A rightly trained soul will bestow on each what of thought each here and now deserves. The danger with us all is, that the visible will gain all, and the invisible little or nothing, and I wish now to speak of the value of contemplation directed to the invisible and eternal.

There is value in it from the knowledge we can

gain from it. The mind loves to know. Knowledge is the food on which it grows, and it is to be gained amid the invisible as well as the visible. There is, I apprehend, an idea somewhat prévalent, that knowledge, in the true meaning of the term, is to be won only from things visible,—that the moment you leave its domain, and go out and off from the world, and launch into the invisible, you leave the precincts of knowledge and enter the sphere of fancy and conjecture: you leave certainties, and are subject to doubts. Now I need not stop to show you how much of all our knowledge of what is and what has been on the earth, lies out of the sphere of what is visible to us personally—how narrow and limited would be our knowledge if we relied on what was visible and tangible to us. You know that our knowledge properly so called of what is passing on our globe every day, comes to us not through our senses, nor our reason, but our faith,—the same principle on which we receive our knowledge of invisible things.

And will any one be so foolish as to assert that we may *know* upon *human* testimony, about the persons and objects which lie within the circle of the visible, and yet cannot know upon *Divine* testimony about the persons and objects that lie beyond in the circle of the invisible! Must our knowledge be limited to what man tells us? Cannot it extend to what God tells us? Must the testimony of one bring knowledge,

and the testimony of the other mere conjecture? Must we stand in the sunlight when we listen to the one voice, and in the shadow when we heed the other? Can the soul stand on the firm pedestal of knowledge in the one case, and must it sink in yielding and slimy ooze in the other? Is man's word a firm ladder on which to mount to knowledge, and God's word but a cloud-ladder on which to soar to doubt and conjecture? No. Give us but the sure revelation of God—a revelation of the invisible and eternal, and ascending on it the soul may climb as far as it reaches. Contemplation placed under its guiding ray will not enter the sphere of conjecture and doubt: it will not make excursions into the domain of the vast and infinite only to be bewildered and puzzled; to come back with weary foot—gloomy and despondent—resolved henceforth to cleave fast to what it can see and feel. There is a way of entering the invisible, a way of contemplating it, which wearies and dissatisfies, and drives back to the solid earth. Enter the invisible by your own way and not God's, climb up to the infinite and eternal over the wall, and refuse to enter by the divine door, and you will enter but a cloud-land. All your thought will avail nought. You will gather no knowledge; you will come back with only wild vagaries. You will reap a garner full of all wild conjecture. But with meek and chastened spirit, enter it by the way that God opens—yield to

His guidance—go as far as He permits—stop when His hand ceases to lead you—be a little child with its tiny hand in its father's hand amid that vast domain, and you will come back with clear knowledge, not with mere conjecture. Through the revelations of God we may *know* about invisible realities. Our circle of absolute knowledge may be indefinitely widened.

Thought directed to the invisible and eternal is valuable as it yields us higher motives of action. The visible things about us yield motives for a virtuous life. The man who believes in no God, no immortality, may draw from this flitting life and this passing world, considerations that may prompt him somewhat to live and act virtuously; and yet the motives drawn from this quarter are relatively weak. From the mere fact that you can weigh and gauge them—that you can bring them all within the circuit of your comprehension—that there is nothing stretching away into the dim and infinite;—from this fact alone such considerations are weak. Even Paul with all his survey of life and of the world, could hardly draw motive enough from them to do and suffer as he and his coadjutors did. “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” He had to pierce the future—pass out into the eternal and invisible, to find motives that should prompt him to live the life he did. The existence of another and invisible world gives significance and value to this.



"If dead we cease to be : if total gloom,  
Swallow up life's brief flash for aye, we fare  
As summer gusts of sudden birth and doom  
Whose sound and motion not alone declare  
But are their whole of being.  
Oh man ! thou vessel, purposeless, unmeant !  
Be sad ! be glad ! be neither ! seek or shun !  
Thou hast no reason why ! thou canst have none,  
Thy being's being is contradiction !"

Yes, life is insignificant without another to shape and give it consistency. This life rests on another—the visible on the invisible—the temporal on the eternal, or it is nought. We must live our finite life canopied by the infinite, with it as a living presence, with it opening up to us its vast recesses, with it yielding to us its motives, or we shall not be likely to live well and nobly at all. Even the motives to a noble life drawn from the visible and temporal, must be alimented and quickened by those drawn from another sphere, or they will fail to affect us. Take away the infinite, and you only make a man a little higher kind of brute. We must have an invisible to make the visible pass well. As some one has said of God, "if there were none, you must make one," so I say, if there is no invisible you must make one, and go into it and draw motives from it, and encompass yourself with them, and shore yourself up, and press yourself on by them, or you will fail to live a true life.

Thought must forge an Eternity to sweep around and enfold the temporal, or the temporal is not worth the having. But there being an invisible and eternal, it will weigh with us only as we send our minds into it to draw motives from it. The eternal unthought of, is to us as though it were not.

Thought directed to the invisible and eternal is valuable, as giving us comfort and consolation. This is the use the Apostle makes of it in the context: "Our light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He himself draws consolation, and he would have others do likewise in present affliction from the invisible and eternal. Affliction to the Christian has its home here. It belongs not to *his* invisible and eternal. He crosses the line that divides the one from the other, to pass out of the sphere of sorrow, and enter that of joy; and it is because the invisible is all free from affliction, that the contemplation of it gives present consolation. It is drawing drafts upon future joys, to enable the soul to endure present sorrows. There is a way of contemplating the invisible and eternal that yields only gloom and despondency, but it is not the Christian way. If a man is desirous to look through the Christian telescope into the invisible and eternal only to gain a view which will enable him quietly to live in present license and sin, that telescope will yield him no such view. If he wishes to take the

Gospel as a simple policy of insurance that he will finally reach heaven, live as he may ; if he wishes to disconnect the Gospel end from the Gospel ways that lead to it, then his glance at Eternity through the Gospel will give him no such prospect as he desires. But if a man will take the Gospel as a whole, take it for what it says of Heaven and the means of reaching it,—take it for the joys it reveals and the open ways that lead to them, not separating what God has joined together—life and death—time and eternity—the visible and the invisible ; if he will take the Christian scheme thus, then through it he will look upon the invisible and eternal as all light and sunny—all one scene of joy and triumph—not a tear—a sigh—a groan ;—and all his contemplations of it will be sweet, all adapted to temper present grief, to tinge the darkest cloud that ever settles upon a human soul with a blessed effulgence.

Thought directed to the unseen and eternal is of value as giving mental elevation, depth, breadth. It makes larger beings of us. Other things being equal, the man who makes frequent excursions into the invisible and eternal—makes them, I mean, not in aimless reverie, but under proper guidance, will be the larger man. A man may be on some sides of him great who cleaves fast to what he sees, who never soars beyond it. He may have a great understanding—he may have fine logical powers that have been

subjected to rigid and sharp discipline—he may have a stern will and a vast learning ; but he is not, and cannot be the greatest. The greatest souls have faculties that prompt a trial of the eternal. The greatest minds stretch themselves on the frame-work of the invisible. They have wonder, curiosity, imagination, a love of mystery, of things that do not all stand out in sharp outline, but loom up large—vast—incomprehensible—dim ;—things that rise higher and sink deeper than their shallow understandings can reach. The man who shrinks from the invisible, who has not a fancy for beings and things that he can only light upon and see into a little way, while in their mighty proportions they stretch away leagues upon leagues beyond the farthest verge which his mind can reach, and where it almost grows dizzy and is ready to topple and fall ; such a man is not the greatest. Indeed he knows little of the greatness of a true soul—has entered little into the feelings which wander out and seek to rove through and over eternity. The invisible and eternal are a mighty trellis on which the soul climbs up to true greatness, and it cannot gain elevation and breadth and profoundness, while absorbed in the temporal. The visible and temporal are not great enough when cut off from the invisible and eternal, to stretch a human soul to its fullest extent. Put it on the very highest and greatest of these and it collapses somewhere,—it is shrivelled

in some of its faculties and powers. It must go out among the unseen and eternal to use and expand all its powers. The great in some departments may be made by the temporal, but not the great all around, not the greatest. The very love for the invisible—the very tendency to steal off into it, is itself a mark of greatness. It is never found in little minds, and minds relatively great may become dwarfed by never requiring or permitting themselves to contemplate what lies beyond time and sense.

Thought directed to eternal things, gives calmness to the mind. We live among perturbing, agitating scenes. Human passion is stirred and often fierce. We are liable to come under its influence and control, to lose our mental balance and government. We are swept away on the current of narrow and petty questions. We lose the ideas of the proper relations of things. We get unballasted. Our judgments become biased and narrow. We put great things for little and little for great. Interests comparatively trivial swell into a mighty importance. Now there is nothing like a frequent contemplation of invisible and eternal things to give the mind composure and steadiness amid the perturbing scenes of life. The contemplation of God has been known to bring calm and sweet repose to bosoms whence sleep had fled for many nights. All great themes of thought are soothing. It is little things oftener than great that

agitate, the little annoyances of life more than even its dread convulsions that perturb. There is something in all majestic things that calms. The great sea,—the quiet heavens—a still, far-stretching wilderness does it ;—much more will the invisible and eternal with their stillness and grandeur do it. The agitated spirit of man has need to soothe itself by excursions out into the invisible and eternal.

I am not, my friends, supposing that you can, neither am I desiring that you should, give yourselves up to these thoughts. Life is real and earnest about you. Labors, cares press hard. The visible encompasses you—the invisible with its silence is afar off. I know this. I would have you live your life right here in the marts of business—not a man resting—not a labor cast off—not a care neglected. Live here and not in the wilderness, but live with your life elevated and spiritualized by many thoughts of the invisible : live here, but live with life's discords reduced to harmony by the silent but all-subduing harmonies of Eternity!

## IX.

### THE RESTRAINTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

*Take my yoke upon you.*—MATT. xi. 29.

THE ox when he passes under the yoke loses his lawless freedom, submits to labor and restraint; so the man when he passes under the yoke of Christ loses his lawless freedom, submits to labor and restraint.

From this passage I intend to speak of the restraints of Christianity.

It has restraints. This is neither to be ignored nor denied, but is to be admitted, yea, brought forward and insisted upon. One in coming into the Christian kingdom, under the tuition and rule of Christ its Head, does come under restrictions. There are stern negations put upon many courses which others outside of the kingdom feel it proper to pursue. And if we will look at the matter more deeply, we shall not find Christianity an exception to a general rule extending to all systems and all things. Whenever we wish to do anything effectively for ourselves or for others, we must come under restraint.

Whenever we wish to accomplish anything beneficent with material agents or living beings, we must put them under a yoke, bind them down, subject them to wholesome discipline. The waters of our rivers running wild will turn no wheels, grind no wheat, weave no cloth. The lightning flashing in the sky, darting in its own moody way from cloud to cloud, only blasts and destroys. Both must be harnessed and subjected to rule ere they will work and help man in his life errand. So with all other things, so with men. You can do nothing effectively with them nor for them till you put them under the yoke, subject them to proper checks. You cannot sail a ship over the sea, you cannot manage a factory, or shop, or school, or college, or family, or church, or nation without it. It is the one thing which you must have when you propose to have organization, to have men work together for a given end. So that when we say there are restraints in Christianity, we only say that in this respect it is like all other systems. There can be no community among men, they cannot live together in the same village, town or nation without it. Abandon it and you sever the ties that bind men; each would want a world to himself, and it would soon be a tenantless world, for he would speedily come to an end without it. Man is the predestined heir of restraint. A wild, lawless freedom is no condition for an intelligent, accountable being.



The restraints, however, of Christianity are not so much outward as inward, not so much special and minute as general. They are of the spirit rather than of the letter. They do not line the whole road of life projecting their sharp points at every step, ready to wound and chafe us. We are not compelled to pass on with book in hand, with eyes and mind intent lest peradventure we should fail to know and comply with some minute duty. Christianity does not persecute us with its nice scrupulosities, goad us with little, petty exactions meeting us at any moment, placed all along at short intervals to impress us with their presence and power. We come under no such petty system when we come under the Christian rule. It would be difficult to find in it all any minute, specific prohibitions that might or might not be heeded, and yet the man remain equally good. It does not exact tithes of mint and cummin. It does not take in charge the mere outward man and make him bow and bend, turn hither and thither, fast, go on pilgrimages. It does not meet him at every turn, compelling him upon pain of forfeiture of its blessings to do this outward and minute thing and not to do that. It rises far above all this. It leaves it for other systems of far inferior design or lower origin to treat men as children. It treats men as men, and in few things is it more remarkable than in its freedom from all those restric-

tions to which a man may be entirely subject and yet be no better man.

Even the Jewish system, divine as it was in its origin, in this respect imposed a yoke upon men which Paul himself says they were scarcely able to bear. It was a system for men in comparative childhood. It was an initial and not a final dispensation, the entrance, the vestibule to another and a better one. It had respect more to the outward, less to the inward. It was ritualistic and ceremonial, temporary not final. It met men with minute directions and prohibitions, and required constant watchfulness lest some of them should be unheeded. But the Christian system did away with all this. It took men out from such narrow tutelage, and put them under a broader and more comprehensive one. It advanced them from their minority to their majority. We are no longer subject to ordinances or prohibitions, to taste not this, or handle not that. We, in our onward progress, have left those things far behind. We are under a dispensation of the spirit, not of the letter, and in consequence have escaped the restraints of the mere letter.

The restraints of Christianity are only so many, and of such a nature, as its very design requires. Know the design of a system, and you will know the checks it imposes. Take Jesuitism for instance—that system which is so tenacious of life, stretching down over

the centuries, bruised, pierced, and yet alive, one of the most potent of all schemes that man has ever devised. Study this "society" in its constitution and laws, pierce to its great central idea, compass its grand object, and then you will be prepared to understand the nature of the restraints it imposes, and to see that without these its end could not be reached, it would be a failure, nay, it could not have lived a century.

So of any other organization. Enter into its idea, its design, and if you are a man of any reach or compass of mind you will know the restraints it requires. No wise man will ever impose these for their own sake, or for the sake of making his power felt. They will be such as the object requires and no more. That object may be to make cloth or cutlery, to sail a ship or to govern an army or a nation. So with Christianity; its object will determine the nature of its restrictions. This is not primarily to make men conscious of the Divine presence and power, not to impress us with the idea of our subjection to the Almighty, not to encompass us everywhere with ideas of His greatness; this He designs, but not primarily and most. He wishes to impress us most forcibly with His pity and love, to bring us into fellowship with Him, to make us more trustful and loving, better in heart and so in life. This is His design, and the restraints He imposes are in accordance with it.

I have said that these are inward rather than outward, of the soul rather than the body ; not outward, not of the body at all, only as these act upon the soul directly or indirectly. Christianity does its work first and most on the heart, and on the heart it first lays its restraints. It prohibits nothing good, puts no ban upon anything that is kind and tender and beautiful, anything adapted to bless man or to glorify God, anything that tends to bring us into harmony with the great sum of things. It gives the freest scope to all such tendencies within men. It only lays its hand upon that within us which isolates and alienates us from our fellows and from God, upon selfishness, upon unhallowed passion in any of its forms.

It has been asked and will be asked again, what specific things does Christianity prohibit ? What may one do and what may he not do under this system ? What amusements may a Christian engage in, may he go to the ball or the drama, may he play at this or that, may he go here or there ? Will he be within the circle of the Gospel and obeying its principles when he is engaging in this or that business ? What specific restraints on the life in all directions does it impose ? We sometimes wish that we could hear what specific outward things we may and may not do. But this is to lose sight of the very object of Christianity. This is to turn the hand back on the

dial-plate of time, to journey back into the childhood of the race and the world. The prime object of Christianity is not to keep us away from the ball, or the opera, or the billiard-table ; it is not to tell us how large and how fine houses we may build, nor how richly we may furnish them ; not how costly churches we may rear, nor how fine and expensive clothing we may put on, nor how much money we shall spend. Its object is deeper than that. Its design is to bring us into harmony with God, and loving fellowship with our fellow-men, it is to make us think less of ourselves and more of others, to seek their good ; it is in a word to create within us a clean heart and to renew within us a right spirit. It settles the outward questions by a new ordering of the inward. It does not tell a man what he shall not do outwardly, but what he shall not do inwardly. He shall not be set upon his own things. All the settlement we can give of outward things from the Christian system is a readjustment of the heart, a new heart with its new and clear vision to see what is fitting. We never can settle what a Christian can and what he cannot do, where he can and cannot go, how much money he may and may not spend. This is only to enter upon a road that has no end, it is only to indulge in a fretting scrupulosity that profits nothing.

There is no rule that can be rigidly fixed for all. One man in the full adoption of a Christian spirit

and principles can do what another cannot do. Let every man be well persuaded in his own mind, seeing first and most that he has the mind of Christ. Let a man be unselfish, love God, love men, and he will not go far amiss, he will have eyes to see the right thing to be done and the heart to do it. We might say with one of the ancients; "Let a man love God and do what he has a mind to."

I am not saying that Christianity has no outward restraints, that there are not specific things which a Christian cannot do, specific places which he cannot visit. There is a whole circle of outward things which a Christian cannot do, but then I say that the spirit which Christianity begets must determine what it is, and the Bible leaves it to determine. The Christian spirit can settle it most wisely and safely, and when the restraints are binding, there is the spirit that makes them easy.

"My yoke," says the Saviour, "is easy." It is so to those who have the spirit of Christ and to those alone. To all beside it is the heaviest burden. It is utterly impossible to tell what particular outward thing will be easy to one till you know his prevailing temper and spirit. The restraints which are easy to one are oppressive to another. Place a young man of fitful or wayward temper or dissolute habits in a well-ordered family and he will feel restless and uneasy. To the obedient child it is a joy to be there.

Take a man of selfish, sinful heart, and impose upon him the outward limitations of the Christian, constrain him to pray, to read the Bible, to be found in the place of prayer, in the Sanctuary, to talk, to act as a Christian, and you oppress him. He must have the spirit which engenders and sustains these outward doings or he is restless. Hence when we take the yoke of Christ we are at the same time to learn of Him, we are to drink in of His spirit, and the new spirit of the Master will make the restraints of the Master easy and His burden light. The inward coming first will assume all the outward restrictions with alacrity. They will be adapted to it. It will not be the worldling with the Christian's restraints, but the Christian with his own, the Christian spirit responsive to the Bible in all that it negatives and in all that it enjoins. And thus instead of being oppressed by the limitations of the Christian, he will in fact feel that they constitute in part his freedom.

Compel the man with the spirit of Christ to do what the man without that spirit does by the force of the law that is within him, and you put him in bondage quite as much as you would the depraved man should you constrain him to do what belongs to the Christian. There is a law in each enforcing him to do and not to do what he does. The inward spirit of a Christian develops itself spontaneously, in its own way, as does the spirit of the godless man. Each is

known by his fruit, and it constitutes the freedom of the Christian to do what he does as much as it constitutes the freedom of the worldling to do what he does. The one has the freedom wherewith Christ maketh His disciples free, and the other has the freedom wherewith the world maketh its children free. Each does what the spirit prompts. So that the Christian as he advances in the knowledge of Christianity may be coming more and more under the control of a delicate and susceptible conscience, a conscience acutely sensitive to the right and peremptory in its command to heed it; and at the same time may be coming more and more into the true freedom of an intelligent being. And it is when conscience discriminates perfectly between right and wrong, and when the soul is almost unconsciously obedient to her voice, that we shall become perfectly free, that we shall have the freedom of law and not of mere wilfulness. Looked at aright it is not till we are spontaneously subject to all the restraints of Christianity, that we shall enjoy the full liberty of Christianity.

The one practical lesson that I would have you draw is,—not to look first and most at the restraints of religion. You cannot take up these first without bondage. Strive to get into the spirit of religion. Seek not to clothe yourself with the restraints of a child until you get the spirit of a child. You cannot make a ladder of your self-denials to climb



up to Christ. You must come to Him first, you must learn of Him, imbibe His spirit, and as fast as you do this and only so fast can you sincerely and freely assume its restraints. Let the mind of Christ be in you first, and the yoke of Christ you will take through love. Take the yoke and strive thus to work yourself into the mind of Christ, and it is like drawing water from dry wells.

## X.

### CONSTANT AND ABOUNDING WORK FOR GOD.

*Always abounding in the work of the Lord.*—1 Cor. xv. 58.

IT is in view of the fact of the glorious resurrection of the just, their victory over death and the grave, that the apostle exhorts them to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

He would transport them to that era in their existence, when Christ shall have eternally delivered them from all the ills of life and sin, and shall have brought them to their high and glorious destiny; and from thence he would bring a motive that should bear powerfully upon the present. Christ will cause you to triumph over all your enemies, therefore serve Christ constantly and faithfully here; "always abound in the work of the Lord." This is a legitimate and forcible argument, and will have weight with all that love and trust Christ. It is an appeal to gratitude and indeed to all that is highest and strongest within us. As we anticipate so much from Christ, let us work for him here. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord."

There are three thoughts here upon which we will dwell. Our work must be the work of the Lord. We are to abound in it. We are to be constant in it.

Ours must be the work of the Lord—Christ's work, not our own : work undertaken on His account—because he commands it : work originating in and from Him, and that would have no existence but for Him. He is to be its centre and end—its Alpha and Omega. The work of the Lord—that which we do for and under Him—may not differ specifically in its outward form from other kind of work. He who works for the Lord, and he who works without any reference to Him, may do the same outward things ; just as a man who works to gratify his noblest human affections may do the same outward things with one who toils to gratify his meanest vices.

There are some wise, but many foolish things said about work in our day. We often hear about work as though it were a good in and of itself, and as though one deserved commendation simply because he worked. We mean to commend men and women when we call them great workers. I do not intend to deny that work is a respectable thing in itself, and that he is in a hopeful state who sets himself to do it with a right good will. The idle man is the only absolutely hopeless man. Get a man fairly at work with might and main, lustily bent on doing something, and he vindicates, after a sort, his right to be,

and at least earns his bed and board in the world where he is. But then after all, we do not and cannot respect a simple drudge,—one who toils with no aim or an ignoble one. We cannot respect a woman who toils by day or night amid exhaustion and sleeplessness simply to put finery upon herself or her children. Neither can we esteem the man very highly who struggles hard, whether it be over his books or in the mine, or the store, or shop, simply to elevate himself—to make himself thought of and talked of—the wonder of a day. We must know the motive of a worker before we can give him our highest respect. *It* must be more or less elevated to command much of our admiration. Just in proportion as it is noble and true does the approval of all right-minded persons rest upon him.

Now the work of the Lord includes all work that is right and fitting in our circumstances and position. There have been those, and there are those still, who separate between work done for Christ and other work which our human affections require. There were those in Christ's day who thought they could alienate the money which a father's or a mother's wants demanded, and appropriate it justly to strictly religious uses. They only had to pronounce over it that magic word "*Corban*,"—this is consecrated to the temple service, and behold! a needy father and mother might go and starve, for all that the son could

be called upon to do for them. Religion was set up in hostility to life, one's devotion was a substitute for the natural affections. Offerings to the temple exempted one from all obligations to kindred and friends. Piety and the indulgence of humane and filial feelings might be in opposition. This has been the idea of some, and may be to a certain extent prevalent still. But this idea Christ did and does frown upon. No son in His day could play off his devotion against his filial obligation, and no one can in our day set up his piety in opposition to his humble, daily duties. No mother can neglect her children under the plea that she is serving her God. No wife can justly leave her house untidy and her husband to neglect, under the plea that she is ministering to others without. In no department are we to set our daily duties in hostility to our piety, or our piety in hostility to these.

The fact is, our religion, when rightly understood, embraces all duty. We do the work of the Lord, and we do all work in that. The work of the Lord leaves out no task of life, humble or elevated, that is devolved upon us. It simply brings all duty to Christ,—grafts it into Him,—causes it to depend upon Him,—to derive all its supports from Him. No work that a man is called upon to do at all, need or should lie outside of his religion. There is none that his love for Christ will not prompt, and his work for Christ

will not include. So that when we speak of doing the work of the Lord, we are not to be understood as separating common life and common work from it. Not at all. Nothing has been more unfortunate in the past history of the Church than this, and nothing could be more unfortunate now. We believe when we are doing the work of the Lord most and best, we are doing common, unnoticed work best. Working for the Lord would not start us off on remote pilgrimages, or part us from common and lowly pursuits. It would rather elevate these, and make all life and all toil holy. The work of the Lord is very much putting the Lord into our work. It is not a new kind of work perhaps, but a new kind of aim and impulse.

In this work of the Lord we are to *abound*. The same considerations that should make us engage in it, should make us abound in it. If it is a good thing to work for Him at all, it is a good thing to work for Him efficiently and fully.

Happiness has been said to be "the employment of our faculties:" if we will make the addition of the word *right*, and say it is the right employment of them, we shall not probably come far from a correct definition of it, so far as it is susceptible of definition in mere words at all. The work of the Lord is right work—it is work that will enlist all the powers that any man has or can have. There is no surplus facul-

ty in any man which he must leave outside, when he comes to engage in the work of the Lord. There is no power which it will not enlist and absorb in some one of its many branches. It is diversified work, not monotonous. It solicits and will employ men of all gifts and all attainments, and will tax and exhaust all and more than all that the mightiest can bring to it. So that if we have a right work that will absorb all the powers of every kind, and abound in such a work, we are adopting the course which an intelligent perception of our own happiness will require. Does any one ask sighingly, "Oh! where shall bliss be found?" we answer *here*, if anywhere—as much of it as our present state will permit, and that too of the same kind that the redeemed in heaven enjoy. It is abounding in the work of the Lord there that makes heaven very much what it is, if indeed we can use the term *work* at all with reference to those who have passed into that world.

Abounding in the work of the Lord is just what the character of Christ—our relations to Him and His to us—just what he has done and is doing and will do for us, would prompt us to do. Work for the Lord is the hardest of all work, when it is done without the principles and affections that prompt it. The mere name of Christ will not engage men in abundant works for Him. There must be a sight of Christ, of what He is and where, of what He has done for us,

and what he is doing, and what he is purposing yet to do, in order to enlist all that we are and can be in work for Him. There must be a realization of His benefits conferred, and to be conferred, before we shall cry, "What shall we render unto the Lord for them all?" There will be no abounding in the work of the Lord, till the love of the Lord shines out conspicuously before us. What Christ is and does must prompt what we should be and do. Abounding love and benefits will beget abounding works. We shall do much when we love much, and we shall love much only when we see much of Christ—much of His heart and His work. The appeal throughout the Bible is Christ's love, Christ's doings, Christ's sufferings; when these come home to us as revealed in the past, when the unfoldings of the future open to us what Christ will do for us, then we have a solid basis on which we shall stand, and abounding impulses to abounding works. We must love much to do much.

*Always* abounding in the work of the Lord. It is not to be a work which we shall do, or in which we shall abound fitfully and at intervals; now taking it up and prosecuting it with vigor, and then laying it down as if weary of it. We are always to abound in it. The work is to be prolific and constant. It is to be here—there—everywhere—now and hereafter—continued till life shall end. It may strike us as incompatible with human weakness



and sluggishness. It may be thought and said even, that abounding work in anything exhausts, and can hardly be kept up, year in and year out. But we are not to forget that this work is not incompatible with due refreshments and even recreations. The Saviour, when He was upon the earth, and He and his disciples were weary with constant toil, took them aside that He and they might rest. Rest, to the end that we may labor the more, is not only permitted, but required. No man is allowed to wear out before his time, any more than he is to rust out, and the wearing out and the rusting out are not likely to be in working for the Lord. Refreshment, that we may abound in the work of the Lord, may be as much a duty as acting that we may abound in it. Constancy in work is perfectly compatible with intervals of repose.

“Always *abounding* in the work of the Lord.” Work for the Lord, enlisting as it will so many and so much of our powers, has a tendency to perpetuate itself, just as all work has. If there is something congenial with the human heart in rest—something which tends to perpetuate it, so is there more also congenial with work, and something which tends to perpetuate it. We work a little heartily in any sphere of right effort, and we wish to work more, to go on, abounding in work. We work a little for Christ, and that little, if we will feed it, and do not allow ourselves to lose the impulse it gives us, will press us on to more and more,

so that we shall come into a strict fulfilment of the requisition of our text, and "always abound in the work of the Lord."

The strong motive which the apostle urges, is one needed by us all. "Abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

This consideration is ever needed to prompt us to do anything. We may play for the mere sake of play. The distinction between work and play is this. We work for something beyond—for an end. We play for play's sake, without an end. Now no one will ever toil except with the hope of gaining something. We need the promptings of hope—the assurance of accomplishment. Now our exhortation is: "*Abound always* in the work of the Lord—forasmuch as your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Not in *vain*. It will tell. It will not fall to the ground, and come to nought. All work for the Lord is sure work. It is done in love, with His strength, and nothing on the large scale is so sure of success. Other kinds of work may fail, this never. The work of the Lord is right, good; it engages our best powers, and it will bring its own blessed harvest at the end.

## XI.

### SPIRITUAL LABOR—ITS INCENTIVE AND REWARD.

*Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

1 COR. XV. 58.

THIS is a part of the concluding verse of that sublime chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, where he declares the doctrine of the Resurrection, and utters the triumphant challenge, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" In view of the final victory over death and the grave, he exhorts his brethren to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."


There must be steadfastness of feeling and purpose. An unstable heart will produce an indifferent life. The work of the world is done by the steadfast men of the world. Given a movable spirit, and you will have a wildly impulsive, never a steadily operative, and ever progressive life. Stand and work, rooted in confidence and feeling. Abound in work.

But work must have a motive, an incitement; and

it gains it in the text. "Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Work, even for God, does not lose its character as work—does not pass into play. It is not the scene nor the hour for that; it will do that all in good time, on a higher stage, in another clime. But here it is *work*, undertaken with a will—prompted indeed by the heart, but prosecuted with more or less of struggle, and therefore needing a stimulus outside of itself, in a goal with its elevating rewards more or less conspicuous in the distance. Men will be driven out of idleness into work, by the assurance that work will tell, and idleness will not. Men will not work either for another or themselves without due encouragement. Boys will sport all day, and gain nothing but weariness of limb, but men will not work unless they see solid attainment to be secured in the end. Even money will not induce men to toil if no real accomplishment comes of it. A company of the richest men of Springfield cannot go into Ferry street, and hire twenty of the most ignorant Irishmen to go down and bale the Connecticut river dry, or to carry stones from one side of the street to the other, and then carry them back again. All men—the most venal men, want to see together with their wages actual progress and attainment. If they carry bricks and mortar up a ladder for a dollar a day, they want to see the building growing higher, or their dollar ceases to have

attractions for them. It will not buy good, nourishing bread for them. Mere money will keep no man at work, though it be paid liberally and punctually. If you think it will, try your hand, if you can afford it, on the first group of hungry workmen you meet on the morrow. Neither is work a thing of simple command. I mean you cannot keep men and get work out of them by authority alone. The sternest overseer of a slave-gang would find his gang in mutiny if he were to require them to work for work's sake, at something where no results followed. Even they must see or believe in results, or their hearts and limbs will not sustain them. Beasts, not men, work under the lash simply. Men must see what they work on going forward, the building ascending, the web lengthening, the rough material assuming shape, the picture growing in beauty. God in Heaven has not authority enough to hold the angels at work, if He were to command them to keep transplanting the trees that border the River of Life from one side to the other. There would be rebellion there, and no one would blame the rebels. Mere command, having no drift, terminating in nothing, cannot keep men or angels at work.

We may properly and justly be summoned to work when the results are not apparent or immediate. All life is full of such work. But then we must believe that our work will ultimately or somewhere



effect something. We cannot be hired—we cannot be commanded to work for nought. No man can do it and be a man. Hence when God summons us to work even for Him, He does not put his authority alone right over against our sluggishness, and open its shotted artillery upon us, and bombard our idleness out of us. No. He tells us to go to work under the assurance that our labor shall be productive. “Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Two thoughts will occupy our attention, lying in the text. *First*, the *condition* of the labor—it must be labor in the Lord. *Secondly*, the *issue* of it—it shall not be in vain.

Our labor must be done in the Lord. It must not be bald, disconnected, merely individual labor—springing from the will of the laborer, and prosecuted by him apart and alone—with no aim out of himself—with no connections, no inspirations from on high—no dependence on divine help—with no lookings for divine approval. Taken on the low plane of the simply natural life, we see that a man cannot do much of himself, apart from the teachings of the past,—sundered from the associations of the present, and the hopes of the future. Every man works with six thousand crowded years at his back. The loneliest farmer on the remote hillside or most retired valley, works with tools that the first artisan in iron

helped to fashion. The ghosts of multitudes of inventors encamp around him as he toils, and he feels the inspiration of the wife and helpless babes in the cottage whose smoke curls perpetually in his sight. We, all of us, do our work, not apart, but in connections, amid associations seen or unseen, near or remote. We do nothing really alone. Our work would be useless if it were attempted in stern isolation from our fellows. To be effective, it must be done in company. It is really we and all the race combined, not we alone, that can do anything, and that too if our work be merely natural work—if it be planting, or hoeing, or reaping, or weaving, or doing any material tasks; and if we find that on the lowest plane of life we do not work apart, neither can we claim so to work on the higher plane of thought, of feeling, of spiritual activity. The fact is, no man was made to work alone—apart from his fellows, or what is more—apart from God. As we really and unconsciously “live and move and have our being” in Him, so were we designed to act consciously and joyfully in Him, under His inspiration earnestly sought, looking to Him for guidance, aid and approval. A man had better attempt to shut the air from his lungs and still breathe, and do the work of life, than undertake to do the work devolved upon him as a creature of God, sundered from Him, His direction, help and approval. All our work is to be work in the Lord, not out of and

apart from Him. Work out of God, if it were possible, would be vain—attempted to be done out of Him, it is the rankest folly. A soul working out of God is a soul out of its proper connections ; it revolves like a wheel disconnected from its fellows, not accomplishing the work of a true soul. It is no business of any man to ask, What can I do alone ? but What can I do with God with me, in me, and over me, and Christ strengthening me ? Not, What goal can I reach by the force of my own will ? but, What goal can I win with Christ in me, the spring of my life and my hope of glory ?

It is labor in the Lord that comes out right, as it is such labor that starts right. A good start indicates good progress, and a good end ; and it is labor in the Lord, undertaken in simple reliance on Him, that begins right. If a man attempts any work consciously, voluntarily, on which he can ask no Divine blessing ; a work terminating in an hour or stretching through a series of years, perhaps through life, on which he can invoke no Divine inspection ; a work which he can more glibly undertake and prosecute in forgetfulness of God than in remembrance of Him, then he must take his chance of an outward, tangible success. He may succeed in doing the thing that he selfishly and out of God undertakes—he may grasp his gold, or his honors, or his pleasures. But his very success is his failure. His labor, seemingly crowned with



laurels, is in vain, because it is not labor that he has done and loved to do in the Lord—enwrapped in a Divine atmosphere, penetrated with a Divine life, and cheered by the Divine smile. It is failure all, vain all, I care not how marked and large the visible results. “Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

I have said that all labor *out* of the Lord, in forgetfulness of Him, out of fellowship with Him, on which His blessing is not sought, not done in simple reliance on Him, is vain. I now add that all labor *in* the Lord is not and cannot be in vain. It must and will accomplish, not possibly our immediate and short-sighted purpose, but something as good, probably vastly better and farther-reaching. The peculiarity of the work that we do in the Lord is, perhaps, that we do not and cannot know what specifically it will accomplish, whereunto it will grow. It is a work of faith as well as of love, it is committed to His hands, given over to His keeping, sown as a seed, in the great seed-field of God. It is cast in as a contribution to His treasury—it is added as a unit to the sum total of agencies by which He is working. It may be a humble work—a kind word spoken for Him—a generous deed done with the eye up to Him, the heart reposing on Him; and being done in Him and for Him, it is not cast forth at random—a poor orphan word or deed—an estray roaming up and down

the world for a keeper and a goal. It goes into sure keeping.

I have remarked that all life is full of work done not for present and immediate results, but for future and possibly remote results. It is not needful that we should have the incitement of speedy returns to keep us at our work. We are men with far-darting thoughts, lofty aspirations, embracing objects, identifying ourselves with plans, that reach through generations and centuries. We deem it a part of our nobility as men, to strike in and embrace and toil for objects that we do not in our brief day expect to see accomplished, or even far advanced. We feel ourselves demeaned and belittled when we follow present and speedily accomplished purposes, and elevated as we follow those that require many hands and hearts and many years to complete.

It is surprising to see how much of our doing is based on faith. The farmer casts his best seed into the earth. To the casual observer it would seem lost. But he has faith in the earth and her germinating power, and in the kindly processes of nature; and so working in trust, he labors not in vain, but reaps after many days. We lay the foundations of Institutions under which our children are to rise to the heritage of a higher and better life. We plant trees under whose shadow those of other generations, perhaps those of strange blood and speech, shall recline, and

from whose boughs they shall pluck the luscious fruit. It is enough that we have hope that we are not laboring in vain, but that some sensitive spirits will be the better for our toil. Lift us to a higher plane of feeling, associate us with loftier intelligences, bring us into sympathy with God, and we are glad to operate along the line of His Infinite plan, put our tiny drop into the broad and sweeping river of His purposes as it flows from His throne, circles through earth and time, and disembogues in the vast ocean of eternity. We work in God and for Him, and share in His glorious and eternal designs, and our work is not and cannot be in vain.

It is hardly extravagant or irreverent to say, that even the Almighty, so rich in resources, can hardly afford to suffer any labor done in and for Him to be done in vain. Loyal souls cannot work for nought. Like sweetest odors, their works must be condensed. Like most precious seed, they must be cared for and watched. Labor in the Lord at times seems to us the most unproductive and discouraging of all work. Its returns are slow, its effects often not seen, like seed sown upon the waters, on whose retiring tides we see it float away without waiting long enough upon the shores to see it yielding a harvest after many days. Faith does the work, and faith must see often the distant harvest. But as God is true, our labor in the Lord shall not be in vain.

Sometimes we see speedy returns—the labor and its rewards are sundered by the narrowest space of time. Seedtime chases the harvest, and both come almost within the compass of a single day. How often is the faithful laborer on the Sabbath, who takes the fresh minds of his class, and plants in them the seed of truth, watering it with his prayers and tears, permitted to come bringing souls like precious sheaves into the garner of God !

Christian fathers and mothers ! toil and pray on. Your labor in the Lord shall not be in vain. Sabbath school teacher ! weary and discouraged at the long delay, ply vigorously the instrumentalities put into your hand. Your labor shall not be in vain. Nothing is so sure of success in the end as rightly directed labor for the Master, well lubricated by prayer. A worker in the spiritual realm who feels that his work has no root, and will bring no fruit, will soon faint and turn back. “God knoweth our frame.” He remembers our tendencies. The inspiration of true, lasting success in our special line of toil must be ours, and we shall have it. We may know that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. The man of the world runs his risk. The man of God runs no risk. Labor in the Lord is not in the realm of chance, but under the pledge of sure success.

## XII.

### ALL THINGS CONDUCTING TO THE CHRISTIAN'S GOOD.

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*—ROMANS viii. 28.

IT is remarkable to say of a creature so frail, and subject to so many conflicting agencies as a single man, that all things combine to work out his real good; but it is still more remarkable when we extend the statement, and make it embrace a whole class of men existing in different ages and lands—subject to entirely different subordinate influences and circumstances. And yet the Apostle makes such a statement. He says of a whole class, that all things work together for their good.

This apostolic declaration will afford us a pleasant and profitable theme of meditation, and it will be my purpose to unfold its import, and to gather a few of the rich thoughts which the language presents.

Let us observe the comprehensiveness of the statement. *All* things shall work together for good. I suppose the affirmation is to be taken in its most literal terms. It is not loose, indefinite; it is not

simply rhetorical language, which is not designed to be pressed too close, to be cut to the quick. It is a precise, literal statement, where every word has import and deepens the meaning. All things outside of the man, that come upon him without any moral agency of his own, be they what they may, all combine to secure his good if he love God. His birth, looked at as to its time and place ; his position in life, elevated or depressed ; his opportunities, many or few ; his fortune, great or small, prosperous or adverse ; his health or sickness ; his gains or losses ; his griefs or joys—all work toward one grand result. To-day in health, and with firm sinews and vigorous purpose, he may be prosecuting on the fields of enterprise the duties of a noble and true life ; to-morrow withdrawn from the field of his activities, shut up in his home and his solitary room, away from the haunts of business, and the labors and doings that win notice and applause, painful days and wakeful nights may be assigned him. Now he may be in the full tide of successful worldly experiment—house may be added to house and ship to ship ; and anon, when deep sleep has fallen upon man, the sudden conflagration may burst out that shall consume his dwellings : or when all is calm at home, the storm may be raging on the distant sea that shall founder or wreck his ships. Now, he may have his family and friends about him, and he may be glad in their presence and smile ; and

anon, he may turn pale as they tremble on the brink of eternity, or weep as they enter its dark domain, and he is left to walk on his journey alone. He may be emptied from vessel to vessel. The discipline of Providence may be varied toward him—now he may be taken to the heights and then down to the depths of life, for he, no more than other men, is delivered from the calamities of earth :—he like them is subject to all its mutations and misfortunes. And yet, amid all his changes, whether he walks the lowly or the lofty path—whether he weeps or smiles—is sick or well,—he has one and the same assurance ; he lives with one blessed declaration ever before him, and ever visible if he will but keep an open sense to see it :—that “ all things shall work together for his good.”

It must be all things, all events, all changes and all circumstances, for if any one were disengaged and taken out from the mass, *that* might be the very one that would come in to counteract all the rest, and work effectively against them. If all other events worked toward the good of a Christian man, while a sudden sickness or a severe loss came in to work against him, then the sickness or the loss might prove more potent than all the rest, and the result might be evil and not good. There can be no perfect assurance of good, unless all events in their combined influence work toward good. The declaration then is to be taken in its most wide and literal terms, that if we

love our Maker, all the events of our individual life work to the same issue. Whatever has happened, whatever may happen, *all* will conspire to secure one result.

We shall do well to observe the entire unity of aim that all things cherish. They work *together*. The Apostle speaks as though they all were conscious, intelligent creatures, as though they were all capable of thought and volition, and could enter into a lasting and friendly copartnership, could form one plan, cherish one purpose. They work, and they work in company.

It would be curious, though not with our capacities possible, to compute the diverse and innumerable influences and agencies that concentrate and work upon any one single man, even the humblest man of the race: the countless events, great or small, that happen to him in his brief history: the changes that are meted out to him. It is not in the power of an angelic mind to comprehend all the agencies that come to affect any one of us all. All past time—all events, recorded or unrecorded, remembered or forgotten, are at work silently upon us. Our personal life is built up out of all the past. Everything that has occurred in the centuries that have gone, makes us a little different. Every person that has lived has cast abroad upon the world a tiny influence that reaches all who come after him. As these material



bodies draw the particles that compose them from earth, air, and sea, as the single drop of blood that circles now in my veins may have laid under contribution all the continents and seas of earth ; so these souls, these lives of ours draw succulence from all other souls—all other lives.

Now it is not that all these subtile or obvious, these great or small agencies—these events of our lives, important or unimportant, work each apart and alone for the good of the lovers of their God. That were a thing most devoutly to be wished and to be grateful for ; if each agency, each event, had a separate and individual good-will toward them, and worked with a single good purpose to bless them. But this idea does not meet the fulness of the Apostle's language. They all work—not alone—but together. They seem bent—not on doing us, if we love God, what good they can alone. They are anxious to combine their strength, to enter into companionship. They conspire, flow together in a divine unity. They are all harnessed like so many swift coursers of the skies, each with all, and all with each, to draw us on and up to good. This is the idea, outstanding and prominent—the flowing together of all things, their uniting like separate drops and rills trickling down the mountain sides of Providence into one stream, on whose current the lover of God is borne toward all good. Mark again the force of the language and the

blessedness of the thought. "All things shall work *together*."

Observe again the *goal*, the *end* toward which they work—"work together for *good* to them that love God." It is not that all events work toward their present ease, or comfort, or worldly advantage, toward their progress in wealth or honor. It were a poor end to aim at—it were an unworthy purpose for the world's events, so far as they reached and affected an individual, to form themselves into a copartnership to make him a little more easy and comfortable—to give him a little better house, and richer equipage—to make his name sound a little farther, and to hear it uttered by a few more, and a little longer in the world's history: while the man in his substantial character was coming no more into obedience to the great laws of the universe, was gaining nothing in purity—richness—depth—power—his surroundings more agreeable, but he himself no better. Providence is not working, all history is not working, all the events of six thousand years have not transpired, millions upon millions have not lived—smiled—sighed—joyed—suffered, and gone out of the world on chariots of pain—Christ has not lived and died—in a word, all the influences that have been set a-going, in our world, that are now operating upon each and all, are not operating that any of us may be a little more refined sort of animals, or that we may pass our days a little

more prosperously. No. God has been and is working in this world to make men and women ; to regenerate, purify, cement, and build up human character ; in other words, God is working in human affairs and events for the good of those that love Him, those that are " called according to His purpose." We may be working toward one end, God may be working toward another and far different end. We may be purposing to build up a fortune or fame, and may be adapting means wisely to our purpose. God may have called us to His glory and kingdom, and may come right across our path, and dash all our well-laid schemes to pieces like a potter's vessel. He may take down all our airy castles, mock all our hopes, strip us of all our property, check us on this hand and on that. He may make it stormy where we had promised ourselves a calm. He may snatch the last star out of our sky, and wrap us in darkness, and we may say, like one of old, " All these things are against me." And they are against our low and personal aims. God means to make all things work together for our real and lasting good, and even we can see that that often turns out for our good which we had regarded as intending us evil. We may faint in our purpose of following real good, but God holds us to it. If we forget it, He has His own ways of reminding us of it ; if we turn aside from it, He has His own ways of drawing us back to it. The resources of God are

infinite. All the world is His storehouse—all time and all events His instruments. He works through all things, and *in* all His true friends, to secure their real, eternal good. "All things work together for good to them that love God."

Let us note what it is in a person—a class, that causes all things to conspire in working out his and their good—what is that magic power within, that unites all things without in a holy combination to secure our good.

It is simple *love to God*. This is not only a charm to bear us harmless through all the dark events of life; it were much if it did this. But it does infinitely more than this. It lays them all under contribution to bless us. It draws them all into our service. It puts, as it were, a new aim and purpose into them. It inspires them all with a secret good-will toward us. Though they may approach us frowningly, yet they come to us as Haman did to Mordecai, to do us kingly honors. It is love going up out of the human soul—piercing the skies—resting in the Maker of all things and the Governor of all events, that puts all things into an alembic, fuses them, and turns them into gold. It is love that is master of all circumstances and events, of all men and things, of all history and all the present, and unites them in blessed harmony in the active furtherance of our good, if we be Christians.

We sometimes think that love to God turns all men and all things against us; and in a sense it does. It does turn the world against us. It does sometimes shut men up in prison and drive them to the martyr's stake. It does bring pain, and groans, and tears. And yet, looked at from the height of heaven, and with eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, love to God bows the world in homage to us, makes its devotees our servants, makes all the enemies of God and His cause workers in conjunction, and when they mean not so, for our spiritual and eternal good. So that after all, love to God is not the timid slave, but the master of the world: it is the golden thread that passes through and around all events, and makes them when otherwise they would not, subserve our wisest wishes and our holiest ends. *All things*—this we know under the light of Inspiration and the tuition of the Spirit—"All things shall work together for good to those that love God."

Our subject teaches us first, where our chief care—our great solitudes should lie, what direction they should take. We cannot control our birth, rank, many of our outward circumstances. We are set down here in this world amid its often conflicting powers and agencies. It is not in us to marshal, bind, and lead on events or men as we would wish. They are out of our domain, and beyond our control. Our care need not and should not be so much to govern as

to get good out of them, and we do this when we love God. Our care then should be to love God, here, in our own souls. We have power, God helping us, over our hearts. Love to God gives us the best possible mastery over the outer world. Let us love God, and all events that we cannot govern—fulfil one office for us. They do us good.

And we can see how great and good must be that Being, how constant His presence and His watchfulness over us, when not the smallest event can oppose His benevolent designs to His friends! He must watch and control the falling of the sparrow, for without this, even it might destroy us. How blessed to be under the government and supervision of a Being who works in all things—in all time—in all the universe, and makes all things work together for good to those that love Him!

The office of faith is to take God at His word; it is, with love in our hearts, to go out calmly into the future so dark to us, believing that God is our Guardian, and that in ways to us unknown, the darkest calamities of life will conspire with its brightest scenes to do us good.

### XIII.

#### HUMAN JUDGMENTS CORRECT, AS OUR WILLS ACCORD WITH GOD'S.

*And my judgment is just ; because I seek not mine own will, but  
the will of the Father which hath sent me.—JOHN v. 30.*

CHRIST had just before affirmed that authority to judge the world had been given Him of God, and He here asserts that His judgment would be just, because His will was subordinate to the Father's will. Justice is a prime requisite in a judge. No one who has not it deeply imbedded in his soul is fit for that office. All gifts, all learning, cannot be substituted for that. The glory departs from the seat of judgment when that departs. Now Christ declares that within the vast area of judgment assigned Him, covering a world and a race, His judgments would all be just, because His own will was subordinate, and His Father's supreme. Were His will out of harmony with God's, did it not play into it sweetly and constantly, He would be unfitted for judgment ; the destiny of the race would be unsafe in His hands. When we leave Christ, and come down to men, it is no less true that

their judgments are just in proportion as they seek, not their own will, but that of the Father.

This then is our theme. Human judgments just, as our wills are in harmony with God's.

It is obvious to premise that Christ's judgments occupy a different sphere—a vastly broader and loftier one than ours;—His wide, sweeping over time and space, peremptory, decisive; ours narrow, fallible, and subject to review;—His embracing a race with their eternal destiny; ours concerned with the smaller matters mainly of individual life. But within our legitimate circuits, with reference to the subjects and interests they include, our judgments, like Christ's, are and can be only just, correct, true, as our wills are in a line with God's. Christ has His sphere of judgment, we have ours. Our judgments are interlocked at least with our own destiny, often with the destiny of others. Our judgments of men and things, of great and important questions and interests, of practical duties, often decide our course, our position in life, our character, our influence, our immortal condition. Limited as they may relatively be in their scope, they are yet as significant as we and our destinies are. How shall they be true? Answer: As we seek not our own will, but God's.

We have to form judgments of men. We are set down among them, we are interwoven with them, we have to do with them, we carry on society, busi-



ness, governments, with them, we cannot escape them. And we have to scrutinize them narrowly, for they are a strange mixture of good and bad, small and great, mean and generous. We cannot put them into one category, and cover them with one general title, and treat them in one general way. We have to discriminate wisely, nicely, pry into shades of character, go below the surface, penetrate to the subsoil, turn up the interior as best we may to the light, and examine them through and through. Much of the success, the peace, the comfort of life will be dependent on our judgments of men. Venturing out among men is very much like sailing among waters where rocks are thick, and blind venturing will not do. How shall we judge men truly and well? Not with a vulpine cunning—not with a shallow suspicion—not with a bitter censoriousness—and not with an easy credulity which takes words for deeds, and surface for character; but with a will running in divine grooves, and with eyes that are burnished with divine eye-salve. His judgments of men are most just who can say with Christ, “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

We have to form judgments of the relative value of things, the present and the future, the near and far-off, the visible and invisible. Every man must and does form practical judgments here. He soon learns that he is not stationary, that he is upon a tide,

sweeping on with all the world to one great terminus where he and all pass out of sight, drop into darkness. He has to consult the present and the future, anticipate the future and provide for it. He learns that this life is not the end—that there is a life beyond demanding his thoughts and his solitudes, and he must determine whether he will heed the voices, listen to the warnings of the future and invisible. He must—he does form some practical judgments on the relative importance of the present and the future, and of the treasures to be laid up in the one or the other or both. He must—he does decide whether he, as an individual man, will act with reference to the great hereafter, to an opening eternity; or whether he will close up that hereafter, that eternity, and act as though earth were all. In every mind there are forming or are formed practical judgments on these things. How shall these judgments be true? Into what position shall a man come where he will be most likely to strike a proper balance between the two interests, the two worlds, and appreciate both according to their relative value? Answer: When like Christ he can say, “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

We are summoned to form judgments of God, of Christ, of the Bible and its contents. Every man who has heard of these must do so. “What think ye of these?” is the query, that steals in or thunders, or at

least knocks more or less loudly at the door of every man's soul. If we are to stand at God's bar for judgment finally, it is no less true that God stands at our bar for judgment now. So with Christ, so with the Bible, so with all spiritual realities. We have our own souls given us, and with them we must form—all due aids being furnished us indeed if sought—our judgments of these glorious personages and interests. I cannot borrow your soul to form my estimate of these, nor you mine. I cannot go up into heaven and get the loan of Gabriel's faculties, his excursive powers, his insight, and with them gain a vision of God, and of Jesus, and divine truth. God comes to me as I am, comes to see what I will think of Him and His. I have but my own tiny mirror in which to collect the beams of His glory. My thought of Him and His may be narrow, circumscribed, shallow at best, but it must be mine and not another's. It is not more true that this eye of mine must be lifted to the heavens, and take in what of their grandeur it can, than it is that this soul of mine must be lifted into God, into His mighty truths, and take in what of these it can. It may see and embrace more or less than another; but it must see and embrace for itself, not for another. What I think of these may be one thing, what you think may be another; but our thought must be our own, it must be the action of our own soul, the result of its sight and apprehension.

Now again the question comes: How shall our thought of these, our judgments about them be true? Answer: When we can say with Jesus, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

We have judgments to form of practical duties in life—what we personally shall do, where go and stay, how much give, how order life in its details, so that amid all its breakages and entanglements, it shall yet preserve a unity and beauty. This is not an easy thing. No one that understands men will deem it so. A due measure of the force of a wise man's thought will be spent on these questions; it will be happy for him if much of the impetus and energy of life are not exhausted in winding his way among these questions of casuistry. Indeed, some men are so absorbed in questions about what they shall do, that they do nothing. Life has all the force taken out of it by the entertainment of these petty and thorny scrupulosities. Let a man put his life under the supervision of conscience at all, and he needs a clear judgment to make conscience a silent, mighty, unconscious power within him—loved and cherished, and not a master feared and dreaded. Now how shall our judgments on these questions of daily duty be true and reliable? how shall we move off and on in life under our own decisions, without ever reverting to the past, going back to the starting-point, and querying whether we were

right, agonizingly reliving the past in the attempt to better live the future? Answer again: By saying with Christ, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me."

On all these points, and on others not specified, where we must and do form practical judgments, we can have the best assurance that they are just when we are seeking in our separate acts, not our own will but the will of the Father.

But that our judgments on all these questions are and must be most true and reliable when we are in the line of the Divine will, will appear from two general considerations:

*First.* We are then in the best internal state to form correct judgments. A wide observation of men, a wide survey of history, leads to the conviction that the practical judgments of men are not true always in the direct ratio of their greatness, of their intellectual breadth and enlargement; much less of their energy of will and action. It ought to be so. The rule should be this. Given a man's power of comprehension, and then you have the measure of the value of his judgments on all affairs appertaining to human life. But it would be a fatal mistake so to conclude. Perhaps if we were called upon to select from the mass of men those that have erred most fatally in their practical judgments of life, we should select some who have been the richest in endowment and

most forcible in action. A man's largeness may be a temptation to shoot off into erratic courses. Napoleon has been thought by many to be the most gifted in certain directions of all mortals, but no man erred more fatally in his estimates of men and things. He swept through Europe in as mad defiance of the laws of man and society as if he had attempted to subvert the laws of matter. He attempted things that a million of men could have told him were utterly impracticable. I might admire the man who with giant and unequalled muscle should hurl a stone beyond my sight into the sky; but I should deem him no less a fool for all his might, if he should think that he was mightier than the silent laws. When the Babylonian monarch prostrates a whole empire with all the gifted spirits in it, except three Jewish youth, before the image he has set up, it may indicate his power, but it is no token of his wisdom. I call him a wise man who perceives the paths that God opens to him, and walks in them silently and quietly; not him who breaks against the barriers that God has reared around him, and wins notice by the noise he makes in the concussion.

Now when a man is in the line of the Divine will, he is in just that state that enables him to see the paths opened for him to walk in—the courses he should take—the localities he should occupy—the things he should do. His passions are subordinated

to law, and send up no impenetrable fogs to obscure his sight ; his will is not driving him with impatient haste into wrong theatres of action ; he has no selfish ends to subserve. He is ready, willing, anxious to see what he should do, with his gifts, and in his position. His judgments will be right because his eye will be single. Subjecting his will in all meekness, he will not be projecting his judgments out into theatres and off upon subjects that God has not brought before him for his judgment to act upon at all. With respect to what lies outside his sphere, he will behave himself like "a weaned child," not prying into things too high or too deep, but walking on his own level, bringing his powers to bear upon topics that are brought within his beat ; while a child, content to think and judge as a child.

But, *Secondly* : Not only will one whose will is in the line of the Divine will be in the best internal state to judge truly and correctly, but he will have the best external helps, and will be in the best possible position to judge so. Even if we would judge of material things rightly, we must occupy the right position as well as have a clear vision. There is one point where a landscape stands out in its loveliest aspect, and all its beauty or grandeur comes gleaming in upon your soul. You gaze upon it elsewhere, and its glory is gone. There is a position in the moral and spiritual realm where the whole moral and spiritual landscape

shines in upon us, and that position is a sweet harmony of our wills with that of God.

Moreover, there are helps enabling our powers to act most successfully in the discovery of truth—in the formation of our practical judgments over the whole area that our duties cover. It is no less a truth of piety than it is a profound apothegm in philosophy, that “in God’s light we see light;” just as in the material world we not only need a clear eye and a right position if we would see, but the sun shining in his brightness. “God is our Sun; He makes our day.”

We see all truth and all duty only as we see them—in His light. We get into line with God, and God shines in upon us. We see. Our powers work in their proper medium. They are balanced. They are in harmony with each other and with God. We pass in will out of God, and it is like light attempting to bend around an angle, or to penetrate into a cavern to meet our vision. We come in will into harmony with God, and it is like standing out under the broad cope of heaven on some hilltop, with the glories of high noon bathing the encompassing panorama. Our judgments are true because we are furnished with Divine aids for judgment.

A single practical remark in conclusion. It is this—that our practical judgments that cover the sphere of our daily duties are dependent not on great



endowments, or favorable opportunities, or high position, but on a simple subjection of our wills to the Father's will. As no two men have the same gifts or positions, so no two men are called upon to have the same precise judgments; but if I in my sphere fall into harmony with God, in other words, if my will is right, my judgment may be right also. The Everlasting Son of God sitting in assize upon a world could not fulfil His function of judgment except as His will was that of the Father which sent Him.

I in mine, you in your lowly sphere, where we are called for decisions vastly less important and yet greatly influential upon ourselves and others, may have our decisions true also in the same way. Get into line, and then judge. See in God—not out of Him, and you will see correctly. Life will be orderly, symmetrical; the minor judgments as well as the greater will be *judgments*, not notions—judgments on which you may act as the mariner acts upon his observations, sailing over dark seas, trusting lives to them.

## XIV.

### THE INTEGRITY OF THE DIVINE JUDGE.

*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*—GENESIS xviii. 25.

THE immediate connection in which this question is asked by Abraham, I shall not stop to consider. It is a general question. The soul of man is often tempted to ask it with some doubt as to the manner in which it shall be answered. In such a world as this, where there is so much wrong and so much suffering—where we so often pass under the cloud, and see no sun and no star for many days—we are sometimes tempted to pass clear up to the throne of God, and lay the question down before the Eternal, and ask if even He will always do right.

There are two ways in which we may answer or attempt to answer this question. We may go into an extended investigation of the ways and doings of God—beginning in doubt as to the answer we shall gain. We may bring the doings of God down to our own ideas—attempt to weigh them in our own balances, and thus seek to establish our conclusions as to the righteousness of God. We may start as true Baco-

nian philosophers with no theory upon the point whatever—with a determination to search after facts—after the Divine doings, and frame our theory to meet our facts—resolved to settle our theories of God as we do our theories of science—resolved to admit nothing till we have examined and weighed our facts. This is one way—the way of demonstration. In this way we hold our judgment in complete abeyance, till we have gone through our investigations; we withhold our confidence till our heads have gone through their logical processes. We are absolutely without a God in whom we can trust till we have surveyed the Divine doings widely, and sifted and settled them well.

But the question may be interposed here: How far shall we investigate the Divine doings before we come to our conclusion—how far shall we go back in the history of the past—how wide incursions shall we make into the empire of God—shall we limit ourselves to the Divine doings here upon the earth, or shall we scale the heavens, and seek to know what He is doing in other departments of His dominions? What facts—how many of the doings of Deity must we know and weigh, before we shall settle it that He will do right? How long shall we remain without a God before we shall settle it that we have a God? You perceive at once that this way of determining the righteousness of God, by demonstration—of reaching the heart through the head, is a very long

one. Some would require years to reach their conclusions, and some, we fear, would be without God from necessity all their days; for the soul that has no confidence that God will do right, is to all intents and purposes without God.

But there is a far better way. It is to start with the confidence that God will do right: it is to bound up and stand on that lofty and solid platform at once:—to begin all our investigations into the ways and works of God—to go out into the dark paths of the universe with this conviction. All sciences have their first principles—their axiomatic truths. Even the mathematics have theirs. The most sceptical investigator that will never advance an inch without clearing his path before him, must start with some things admitted. And in theology too, there are axiomatic truths that we must stand on and start on, to stand and start at all, and this is one of them: The Judge of all the earth will do right.

This we may regard as one of the intuitions of the human soul. It has been a question with wise men, whether a belief in the existence of a God is planted in the human soul—down among its very foundations, and wrought into its entire structure. It is sufficient for all practical purposes to say, that the idea of the Divine existence is suggested in germ at least, as soon as our faculties are quickened—as soon as we begin to look out upon nature, to commune with it—to think

and feel. We say, in germ, for the idea of the Divine existence like other ideas, is dim and shadowy at first; but we believe there is no moment when a healthy, well-adjusted soul is left without this idea. An utter absence of it is a species of insanity. Now we say that as soon as this idea of the Divine existence rises in the soul—its light and glory—its richest, best possession,—so soon does the idea of the Divine righteousness rise with it, and become a part of it. We name it an intuition of the soul—it springs up spontaneously—prior to all demonstrations, and we may add too, it is the basis of all demonstrations; so that it requires no lengthened investigations to prove it. The learned man has no particular advantages in this respect over the ignorant. If it depended on demonstrations, the educated would have it, the ignorant would be wholly without it. But it is an intuition—we start with it—we build our beliefs upon that as a foundation. We are all afloat—a fleck of foam gliding on the current, till we have this belief: “The Judge of all the earth will do right.” I fix this conviction, then, among the intuitions of the human soul.

But the idea being there in all right minds alike almost, *it*, like other ideas, may widen and deepen with time and thought. *Mark the corroboration* which the idea gains in the mind of Abraham from the position of God: The Judge of all the earth. He is a *Judge*. Place one in the position of a judge, and we

anticipate at once the clear shining out in him of the principles of right. These first and most. He is in that position to discriminate between right and wrong—to give righteous judgment. The Bench is the last spot that we expect to be invaded by passion or corruption. When the waves of passion sweep over a community, threatening a universal deluge, then we hope to see the seats of justice rising aloft above the waves, like mountain peaks, shining clear and bright, with a transcendent spirit of right. We look to them as the last resort—if they are submerged, hope dies.

This expectation that a Judge will do right, is not, in most civilized communities, disappointed. There may be weakness, prejudice, misconception among judges as among other men, but they meet, ordinarily, the demands of their position. The exceptions stand out in lonely and terrible conspicuity in the history of nations. Bacon, as a philosopher, has won the plaudits of the world—but Bacon, as a judge,—as one who tarnished the ermine he wore, is a hissing and a by-word;—the greatest—wisest—meanest of mankind. Now God is a Judge, and shall not He do right?

He is the Judge too of all the earth. Other judges have a narrow, circumscribed field. They corrupt judgment, and a District, State, Province, suffers temporarily, till impeachment or death removes them. But here is a Judge not of a State or nation, but of

all the earth—a Judge not for a day, or year, but for all time;—the Judge of those who lived beyond the flood—of those now upon the earth, and of all coming millions. Shall not He do right?

His position demands of Him at least right. Right—right—this is the first and great demand—this is the granite basis on which all government, human and Divine, must build itself up. Right first and most. Right or else nothing—*it* before generosity—before mercy—before leniency. We abjure and discard a generosity that acts before righteousness. We must have this first. This would be a bleak and unattractive world if there were only granite cliffs raising their dark, weather-beaten heads to the sky. It is no pleasant sight to sail along our coast, and see those frowning battlements that nature has built to set bounds to the sea; but what would the world be without them? And so, it would be a bald, unattractive character, that should only have one great, all-ruling idea;—right—right at foundation—right before—right behind—right around and above—nothing but right. You want more, but you want this, or all that is graceful and attractive about a man—his foliage and flowers, is of nothing worth. You want right in the man—more in the judge—most of all in the Judge of all the earth.

*Mark again, the peculiar turpitude* of one with God's powers, and in His position, if He should not

do right. Man failing to do right, and Deity failing to do right, are two very different beings morally estimated. Man fails to do right often out of weakness—under the pressure of severe temptation. He may bend to wrong as the osier bends to the blast, and may recover himself when the blast is past. He may do wrong, not for wrong's sake—not from pure malice, but from impulse, passion; but if God even in one single instance in the history of His creation does wrong, He must do it out of mere love of it. He never fails to discriminate accurately between right and wrong, and He can be subject to no temptation to do wrong. He has no new power, no new position to gain by it. He is on the pinnacle now. He can rise no higher—be no greater. He is utterly and eternally elevated above the temptation to do wrong; if He fails to do right in any instance, it must be out of pure malice; so that he is as much worse than a man who should fail to do right, as His greater knowledge, power, position, and His entire elevation above all possible temptation combined, could make Him.

Consider, too, the awfulness of the contrary supposition—that He might not do right. Look at His power—infinite: look at His position—the Judge of all the earth—having us and our destiny entirely in His hands, with no possibility of escape: for “whither can we flee from His presence? if we go up into



heaven, He is there—if we make our bed in hell, He is there—if we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea,” His right hand is over us to grasp and hold us. Consider such a Being—in such a position, and then admit the possibility that He might not do right; and it would be enough to cover the heavens with sackcloth—quench the light of every star—muffle the world in darkness—send all its dwellers shrinking to their graves.

If God may not do right—if He may do wrong, He will do it on the grandest scale. He has a universe for His theatre—He has eternity for His scope—He has all beings as His objects. No destiny so joyous under such a condition of things, and yet no destiny so utterly hopeless as entire annihilation, for if He is disposed to do wrong at all, on whom shall He inflict the wrong but upon us, and how shall He permit us to lie down in insensibility, when, if He did so, He would fail utterly of beings to injure? Upon the very presumption for a moment, that He might do wrong with its awful results, the mind swings back with a peremptory decisiveness to the conclusion—the Judge of all the earth will do right.

This being assumed, two or three inferences will follow: And, *First*: whatever wrong there is in this world God has not done it. There is wrong—great wrong—done to thousands—millions. Nations have

been crushed under it. Its iron heel has trodden out the life of myriads. Wrong is now upon the earth. It worries and devours the innocent. Its voices fill the air. The groans of its victims have entered into the ear of heaven. There lie in ocean's caves—there sleep in silent burial-places its countless victims; but God has not done it. No one can bear the challenge up to Him, and say He did it. He is clear of all responsible connection with it. He neither has, nor ever had anything to do with it, in the way of originating or sustaining it. Be the soul forever swept clear of all sly, subtle suspicions, which, like birds of evil omen, hover in its outskirts, that God has done directly or indirectly any of the wrong that goes to make up so much of human history.

*Second.* If the Judge of all the earth shall do right, then we have only to settle what God does, and we may at once pronounce it right. We need go through no extended process of investigation, we need not weigh it in our diminutive balances, and see if it will tally with our narrow views of right. No! once separate what man does from what God does—leave us the doings of God in their simplicity, and then we may put to our seal that they are all right. We have but to ask what the Divine Being does, and when we have searched it, we inscribe *right* upon it in broad and legible characters. We may not be able always to see how it squares with the rule of right—neither •

is thus necessary. We are to know by inquiring what He does, and before it we are to sit down with the simplicity of children. To mount by a bound to the belief that He does' and will do right in all time and in all eternity, is one thing; to bring His doings in their vast sweep, in their infinite combinations down to our ideas of right, may be quite another thing.

*Third.* If the Judge of all the earth shall do right, then it follows, that He is concerned that others shall do right within the limits of His jurisdiction. A judge is the guardian of right within the precincts assigned him by the proper authorities. No wrong can be inflicted with which he has and can have no concern. Now God is the Judge, not only of other worlds, but, what now more immediately concerns us—He is the Judge of all the earth. All the earth—in all stages of its history—from its first day to its last, is within His jurisdiction. To right the wrongs of earth is His work, for He is its Judge. No one can escape Him. His authority covers the earth. No one can do wrong afar off upon the silent sea—down in the dark dungeon—out upon the lonely plantation—up in the secret chamber—nor in the solitude of the heart, without being held to answer for it at the Tribunal of this Judge. No wrong will eventually go unpunished except through repentance, and a longing hold upon the hope of the Gospel. There is indeed one

covert from the storm and the tempest,—the over-arching canopy of Christ's atonement. Flee under it and you are safe. Stand out in the open plain, and on every wrong-doer shall descend at length the gathered wrath—the fearful condemnation of Him who is the Judge of all the earth

## XV.

### THE FIXED HEART.

*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise.—PSALM lvii. 7.*

THE heart is the seat of the emotions, feelings, preferences. It rules the entire soul and directs the entire life. As the heart is, so is the man. If it is good, he is good, if bad, he is bad. If it is fixed he is fixed; if wavering, he is wavering. The heart is fixed when in its feelings, its central choices and constant preferences, it is settled, firm; when it is not drawn to temporary and opposite choices; when its whole drift and current sweep ever in one direction.

The heart may be fixed wrong, and often is. It may choose wrong objects, and run in evil channels, and may know no waverings in its choice of the evil. It may be set toward the bad and away from good—toward self and away from God—toward earth and away from heaven and eternity. It may have passed into the chronic state of earthliness and ungodliness,

may be fixed with an iron rigidity in evil which nothing can remove or even start. There it is, the same firm thing, changing not while years come and go, or if it change it changes only to a sterner fixedness—or a more settled composure in worldliness. Many a man of earth may adopt the language of the Psalmist and say, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed,—to earth and sin so fast that nothing can change it!” All the powers of the world to come, the love of God, the mercy of Jesus, the songs of heaven, the wailings of despair, cannot unsettle it, and turn it away from its objects. It is awful when the heart is thus fixed,—so fixed that nothing that has come or probably will come from God will alter it.

And there is a fearful tendency in every unrenewed heart to become thus fixed. Things work toward that end. Many influences combine to bring it about. Little by little, every passing day, the heart adjusts itself to the world—nestles down into it as its bed and home. Things that once alarmed and shook it, soon shake it no more. Common or startling providences, sudden sicknesses or deaths, warm appeals, stirring warnings, that once sent it to a sleepless couch, soon jostle it not in its fixed centre. The heart is fixed, but fixed wrong—in a most dreadful stupidity and earthliness.

But on the other hand, the heart may be fixed right. It may be settled in its preferences for good,

for God and holiness ; may be bent determinately, once and forever toward these. Amid prevailing surrounding worldliness and sin, even amid the shocks of severe temptations, it may know no wavering. You may come and go, and it remains the same, except that it is fixed firmer and firmer in its preferences and choice of God and good. It has a settled and increasing proclivity toward good and away from sin. And as in the case of the unrenewed heart, so in the case of the renewed heart, there is a tendency toward fixedness. Things in its case work toward that issue. It is under influences that impel it to a settled state. More and more the heart of the good man works its diverging, discordant tendencies out of itself, and its tendencies to unity into itself. It wavers less and less, and becomes fixed and firm more and more, till at length the good man can often say with the Psalmist, " My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed—in the love and service of Thee, in sweet confidence in Thee, and in all Thy ways ! " It is a great and blessed thing to have the heart thus fixed in the love and trust of God and of good.

The heart thus fixed is *calm and peaceful*. It has taken its side for an eternity, and taken the side, too, which will increasingly satisfy all the best powers of the soul when they are quickened to their highest activity. There can be no peace while the spirit is unsettled, while it is driven hither and thither by hostile

agencies, the sport of conflicting winds—now conquered by this, and anon by that. Not infrequently you see persons temporarily occupying that point where the tides of influence from the two opposite worlds meet and conflict. They are subject to both, and yield permanently to neither. Sometimes they are drawn by the current heavenward, and are tempted to abandon all, and seek Christ and the salvation of their souls; and then they are sucked under by the current that draws earthward, and are tempted to yield all, and choose their portion here, risking the life to come. Sometimes one is kept in this place where the two seas meet, for days and months, and while there he is wretched. But the heart cannot bear this conflict, this wavering, unsettled state. It demands decision one way or the other. It must take its side—must come over upon the side of God or of the world, and it usually does this very soon, when brought to the point where it must choose between the two. It chooses God or the world, and so reaches calmness and peace of some kind by its choice. But real peace cannot be gained by having the heart fixed in opposition to God. “The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest.” The heart must be fixed the right way, and on the right side to gain peace that will last. It is when it is fixed in and upon God that it can sing and give praise. It is tuned to real harmony and joy only then.



It is not till the heart is fixed that it can grow rapidly and constantly "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." There is no increasing excellence to the man whose heart is unsettled—driven hither and thither, now yielding to this object and anon to that. Excellence, growth in good comes of permanence. All things require this if we would have them grow. The trees of the forest—the plants in our gardens can only grow and come to perfection, as we allow them to continue where they are, in friendly and rich soil. We pluck them up, change them from point to point, to dwarf and perhaps kill them. So with the heart; it must be fixed in its choices—must take its side once for all, if it would grow more and more into the likeness of Christ. It must have time and opportunity to send down its roots into its own soil, and gather succulence from a wide extent of its own peculiar domain. The heart that is unfixed, wavering, not knowing where it shall find itself on the morrow,—the mere target of circumstance and accident,—having no root in itself—no power of selecting and retaining its position,—dependent on outward influence—the slave of mere events, cannot advance in excellence. It is the bond-servant of its own or another's whim or pleasure. It has no choice affected by truth and a sense of duty. It has to beg leave to be where it is, of fitful mood or passion, its own or another's. It ever lives upon

the surface, strikes down no roots, is liable to be overturned by every passing breeze. Such a heart is doomed to impotence and babyhood,—can never grow to man's estate. It is the fixed heart only that can gather strength to itself, and grow up to the stature of a perfect one in Christ.

The heart that is fixed is alone prepared for the temptations and conflicts of life. Goodness of every degree, great or small, cannot escape opposition in such a world as this. It must be ready to prove its mettle and power. It must beg no simple leave to be, must borrow no indulgence of its enemies. It will not gain it. It must stand, because under God it has strength to stand—must exist, because it has a right to exist. No goodness lives because its opponents permit it to do so. It must have a standing here for other reasons than those derived from their kindness and forbearance. It must prove its right and power to be where it is. But it is only the heart that is fixed on God and goodness, that is rooted and grounded in the truth, that is prepared to meet opposition and endure conflict, only such a heart that can stand when its enemies assail. The rock in the midst of the ocean, or the cliff or headland that juts out into it, does not abide in its locality because the waves are lenient to it, and calm their rage when they approach it. It borrows no leave of them to stay where it does. It stands there in lusty defiance of them, because it

has power to laugh at their rage. It is fixed on its deep foundations, and the waves of centuries may beat against it, but they move it not. So the heart of the good man in such a world as ours must rely not at all on the leniency of its foes, upon their indisposition to attack and conquer. That rock might as well appeal to the forbearance of the sea; or the ship that rides its waves might as well send out its moaning prayer to the tempests to spare it. The sea will rend that rock from its base if it can;—the tempests will send that ship upon the breakers, or down to unknown depths if they can. Between them and the ship it is a simple question, which is the stronger.

And so it is a question between the regenerate heart and its foes, which is the stronger, all things considered. There can indeed be no question which is the mightier, apart and alone. The poor heart of man could maintain no conflict with its foes, relying on itself. It is only as it is based on God, and relies on Him, that it can stand a moment in opposition to them. To them it will owe nothing. If it ever conquers them, strikes through them, and reaches its home, it will not be by any weak appeal to their pity. It must defy them, but only in the name of the Lord. Fixed in Him as the rock is fixed on its deep foundations—fixed in Him, having its roots struck into God, grasping Him as the oak in the pasture has struck its roots deep, and sent them wide, grasping perhaps

some giant rock beneath the surface, thus, and thus only can it stand in the day of conflict. The fixed heart only is prepared for the great battle of life. If I can say, "My heart is fixed, trusting in God," then am I prepared for conflict.

The heart that is fixed, will not only be ready for all sorts of opposition, but it will soon be comparatively relieved from certain kinds of opposition. It will soon clear a large space about it for action—will make room for itself. For example: A young man of promise comes to our village, or goes to a distant city. He is social and genial—ready to enter into friendly relations with his fellows and with all. It is not known as yet what he is and what he will do, and perhaps he scarcely knows himself. He has capacities, but it is not known how they will be developed. Such a young man is at first not likely to be left without personal solicitations to evil. He will not be left to discover by his own searching avenues to ruin. Evil will be brought to him. He will have those avenues pointed out to him. He will be importuned on this hand and on that. Now if his heart wavers, and is known to do so, he will be plied all the more vigorously. The attacks will be frequent and powerful in proportion as he is supposed to vacillate, to have an unsettled mind with respect to such solicitations. But let it be found as the result of experiment that his heart is fixed in the love of sobriety,

purity, and virtue; that nothing can start him from his integrity, and soon he will cease to be annoyed. Evil companions will depart from him. They come and find nothing in him, and they will soon cease to solicit him. His heart is fixed. And this is but an illustration of a general principle. A heart that is known to be fixed in good, will cease to be annoyed in certain ways in which others are. Its enemies will give up after a time certain forms of their solicitations, because they know that they will be unavailing. They have been so often turned back and foiled, that it would be but folly to repeat the experiment. Such hearts may be taken into the sphere of other experiments upon their virtue, but these will be abandoned. "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you." Oppose to him a heart fixed—settled once for all in the love and service of God, and he will turn back discomfited.

A heart *fixed*, can only be effectively coöperative with God. A fixed heart will of course show itself in a uniform and consistent life, and will thus be found in the line of divine agencies—found among the instrumentalities that God uses to advance His glory and kingdom. A man must be reliably good, reliably a servant of God in evil report and good report—amid depressions and revivals, in order to be used of God to effect most for Him. A man that wavers, that changes his ground often on any subject, either never

gains power at all, or soon loses it. We will not be influenced by a man who cannot keep his ground,—who has no grapple to his soul—no anchor that sends its flukes into eternal principles, that will hold him amid outward and even inward perturbations. We respect and will be influenced only by the firm, the fixed man.

We say of some men,—we do not know where to find them, and perhaps they do not know where they will find themselves. We say of others,—we do know where to find them. We may take a journey over land or sea, we may be absent months, perhaps years, and we return; we ask for such a man—is he alive? is he well?—we know if he is alive where we shall find him. His heart is fixed, and his heart being fixed, his life is fixed. Others may waver, may yield to passing influences—to passion—to interest: but him we expect to see where he was, far more surely than we do the elm under whose shadow we reclined in childhood, or the rock up which the lambs ran in spring time. He is almost as sure to be there as is the star that glistened over the roof-tree, or the water that shimmered in the moonbeams. And being there—fixed firm,—he is a light in a dark world: a man to walk by, almost to live by and die by. His heart is fixed. And no man's heart can be fixed in the right place, and on the right beings and things, with-

out being a marked man, a powerful man. His stability, if he have nothing else, gives him value.

A fixed heart will usually be a glad one; it can "sing and give praise." As the viol must be tuned, all its strings drawn and fixed, ere you can wake it to glad and harmonious music, so the heart must be fixed—its strings fixed, ere it can burst into songs of praise to God and the Lamb. A fixed heart is a tuned heart. It only can be waked to the harmonies of the church on earth or the church in glory. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." Let us say this, and then can we add, "I will sing and give praise."

## XVI.

### THE GLORY OF GOD THE GOVERNING PRINCIPLE OF ALL LIFE.


*Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to  
the glory of God.*—1 COR. x. 31.

THE Bible never prescribes what specific things each man shall do in life. It makes no inventory of the words he shall utter, or the deeds he shall do. One will look in vain there to learn where he shall locate himself, the profession he shall prosecute, or the daily and hourly duties he shall perform.

We sometimes long to have the path clearly traced in which we shall walk—for some record in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, which will easily and without doubt or danger of misapprehension on our part, assure us of the right course in every exigency. But on mature reflection, we can see that while this would be the easiest, it would not be the best thing. If we could resort in every question of difficulty to some book or some oracle, and by a mere glance or query, infallibly solve our difficulty and determinately settle the thing we were to do, it might diminish the



dangers of life, but only by diminishing its dignity and importance. It would settle our doubts only by removing the necessity of balancing opposite reasons—sharpening and developing our faculties amid conflicting influences, and thus elevating our entire natures. It would reduce us to perpetual childhood, and we should be only free from danger by the loss of our true manhood. This is developed as much by the effort to decide what we shall do in life, and where we shall do it, as it is in doing it when we have once decided. We need each and all of us the discipline which is gained by determining what we shall do all our days and every day. There is not a person upon the footstool of God who might not have been made a stronger being intellectually and morally, by bringing all his powers to the decision of the question, what he should do in all the hours of this holy day—where he should go—what, in a word, stern and uncompromising duty required him to do. We must, in life's beginning and all through it, be bringing all our powers to determine what we should do, to get our life in each section of it, and through its entire course, into union with God's will with respect to us. A good man, we believe, will not be left to doubt as to his general course of life, or the particular acts which go to make it. In all his questionings he may expect Divine illumination, but then he is not to be saved the trouble of using his faculties in deciding.



No Divine word will stop all queries, and make us mere executive functionaries, instead of reasoning and deciding moral agents.

But then, while in the Bible or elsewhere we are not at once and peremptorily to learn what we are to do in each case, yet in that Book we are to learn the great principles on which we are to conduct life. If it does not decide for us what we are to do, it does tell us that in the most trifling as well as the greatest thing, "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God." This grand motive is to underlie as a great granite formation our entire life and our entire doings. It is to bear them up and sustain them. We are to do nothing which we cannot do with it as the great controlling consideration. By doing all to the glory of God, it is obviously meant that we are to have reference to Him, to His honor, to His Law, to the making known His entire character in all its perfection to His creatures. Neither self, nor our fellow men are to dictate the course which in each instance we are to take. We are not to ask what will be easiest, or most reputable, or most profitable, but what will please God. Not out of our own hearts, nor out of this fallen world, but out of Heaven, right out of the heart of God, we are to draw our motive of action. Our text then presents the glory of God as the governing principle of our acts—of our entire life.

In the *first* place, it presents a very *simple* motive for life and action. There is nothing complex about it. We are not distracted by it. It is to the life what the magnetic pole is to the needle, always one, and always the same, and always there. When we embrace this as the governing principle of our life, we sweep away a whole mass of distracting questions,—we have a fixed meridian—something to cast anchor upon. We are not compelled to look here and there to see whether what we do is likely to please this man or that ; or whether our course will be more easy and agreeable ; whether it will give us a run over smooth seas, with pleasant breezes, to an agreeable harbor ; or whether it will put money into our pockets, or take it out : it presents one simple question—What will God's glory require of me here and now ? It is the one question ever recurring—the great central and all-controlling question. *It* settled, all is settled. Now there is advantage in this simplicity, and there is power in it.

*Secondly* , this is a *comprehensive* motive or principle. It runs around and embraces our entire life. Nothing that we need do, should lie without the compass of such a motive. It includes all that a man may properly and honestly do. In and of itself it does not settle what we are to do. When we act from this motive, we do not by embracing it determine our line of life, whether we are to preach or

teach, be a merchant, farmer, mechanic, or anything else. Other things are to come in to fix this. What we would say is, that this motive is wide enough to comprise all the doings of an honest man and an honest race. They may be all sustained and carried on upon this as a basis. It may govern the whole of each life and the whole of all lives.

*Thirdly*, it is a *practicable* motive. This declaration may, and perhaps will, meet with a good deal of scepticism in the minds of some. We fear that it is a sentiment avowed by some and felt by more, that men must, in order to live at all in this world, do some—yea, many things, under the control of other motives than the one required in our text—the glory of God. It is felt to be too lofty, too divine, to direct all the affairs of earth and all men. It may do well, it is thought, for ministers and Sabbath days, but it is doubted whether it can be carried over into week days, and control men in the market, and in all the smaller and larger concerns of secular life. It is thought that it would hinder a man from making as good bargains as it is necessary that he should make to maintain a fair show in the world. It is at least secretly alleged, that one would find it quite uncomfortable to be ever constrained to stop and inquire—“Am I making this or that trade for the glory of God, or for the benefit of my own purse?” To be sure, the adoption of such a principle would make this a

very different world ; it would revolutionize the whole course of procedure on 'Change—in the store—the shop—on the farm—in the dwelling ; but we deny that its adoption is impracticable. We deny that a man is compelled to ignore and abjure this principle on all days except the Sabbath, and in all business except that which is sacred. A man may do anything that is just and right under its control. If a man wishes to do wrong, to live selfishly, and for this world only, to cast off the remembrance and the authority of God, he must indeed discard this as a motive. But is a wicked life the only practicable life ? In this world of God, under these Laws of God, bound to the Bar of God—in this life so fleeting, passing on to a life so lasting, is it impracticable to live for God, and to be controlled by a regard to His glory ? It is all a mistake—it is all a device of the Evil one, coined in his wicked heart, and circulated by his followers, that it is impracticable, that we should not get on in life, should we live and act for the glory of God. Its simplicity makes it practicable, its comprehensiveness makes it so, and its intrinsic rightfulness makes it so.

*Fourthly*, this motive gives *dignity* and *value* to life, to life wherever it is cast and in whatsoever employment it is spent. I would not deny that there are positions, callings, employments, which are intrinsically more elevated than others, and which it might

be proper for us to seek more than others, just as between gifts, we have an apostolic direction to covet earnestly those which are best. Yet every honorable calling derives dignity from the man and his motive. In our complex life, in a world of such diversity in pursuit, where the existence and happiness of all are so dependent upon the prosecution of so many callings, we must occupy different positions. We cannot all be equally elevated and equally noticed. In such a world, and with such narrow minds as ours, it seems necessary that a part should be placed where they will be little noticed, and little talked of, even though they may be equally or even more useful. In a building, it is the superstructure, not the foundation—in a tree, it is the foliage and the fruit, and not the roots, that attract notice and admiration; yet the foundation and the roots have their value. So in society, it is not all, but a part, who win the notice and the applause. Things are in such a dishevelled state here, that it is quite impossible for each to gain his own specific portion of attention and reward.

And indeed, if we will look at the matter more interiorly, we shall find that the great ground plan of this universe is not formed on any such idea. It is not intended to give notoriety and attention to the individual. Each is made for all. Each has his faculties and calling assigned him with reference to all. Each is put here or there, not for his sake mainly, but

for the sake of all. Society, the entire race, was intended to act as a unit toward one end. It is an organism. Part is articulated with part. It is a body having one life, and each man is fulfilling his function and deriving his highest enjoyment, when, as a member, he is fitted into and lovingly works in his place. This all-comprehensive motive—living for the glory of God, will put and keep him in his place. He will not desire or live to be noticed, any more than the different members of the body live to be noticed. He will live for the whole under the pressure of this motive, and in doing so, his life is truly dignified and valuable.

It is a great mistake into which we fall—so many of us—that of supposing that in order to have dignity and value as a man, we must pursue this calling rather than that ;—that if we do not, we are clean gone forever—that we are no more valuable or valued, and that all significance is eliminated from life. Many a youth is crowded full with the thought, that if he can only leave his father's farm and stand behind a city counter, he is made ; that a leap from the farm behind the counter, elevates him from henceforth ; that buckram and broadcloth will put the dignity and value into him as well as on him. Poor simpleton that he is, and, for that matter, that we all are, for the young man is only following out the ideas which he has learned from us. Why will we not all learn

that it is standing in our lot and place, and working for the glory of God there, which gives true value and dignity to life! Viewed from the heights of yonder heaven, a man has no dignity, and no true value, who does not live for the glory of God.

I have but time to add, in the *fifth* place, that such a motive as this can alone give union and harmony here on earth, as it can alone give union and harmony in heaven. It is not by working after union directly, that it is to be won. Union is secured by one way only. We must come under the power of the same motives and impulses—the same affections and purpose. Then shall we flow together spontaneously, because we have complied with the law of moral union. Without obedience to such a law, union is not possible, except by physical force; and when force is employed to unite, it is not living but dead things that are united. A living union only comes about by a love to, and a choice of the same objects. Let all men live for the glory of God, and all men would constitute one blessed brotherhood.

And this is the Gospel in contradistinction from the human way of uniting men. This idea of universal brotherhood, has haunted men from the beginning. Noble minds and some minds not so noble, have discoursed of it, and devised schemes to bring it about. This idea lies at the basis of all the theories of the socialists and communists of France. Unfortunately,



they discard the only, the Gospel way of accomplishing it,—the subjection of all hearts to the Law of Heaven—the glory of God.

This Law is to be adopted by us personally. Each of us is to choose the glory of God as the end of his being. For it we are to live and toil—for it we are to suffer and die. We are to strive, we are to pray, we are to seek the aid of God's Spirit till this Law shall be the one we shall all spontaneously obey, till it shall require no effort, till we shall obey it as promptly, as unconsciously as we breathe.

## XVII.

### FEAR—CONTROLLING AND CONTROLLED.

*The fear of man bringeth a snare : but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.*—PROVERBS xxix. 25.

THE first impression of this passage is, that the writer refers to the fear we may entertain of our fellow men—that it is *that* which bringeth a snare. But this signification will hardly bear examination. The meaning is, that a man's own fear, his own timidity brings a snare, exposes him to hazard. It is fear, as an internal, subjective quality in our own natures, that draws us into danger.

Fear is an element in our mental constitution. We should not be well made up, should not be men without it. As a great, silent, unconscious force, operating every moment while we think not of it, it is our shield and defence. Its healthy action is unobtrusive—powerful to guard us—to hold us back from a thousand evils, but like the heart within us, doing its work without drawing our attention to it. But often, fear lodged so deeply down within us, intended to act so silently and yet so forcefully, breaks over its

boundaries, overflows our entire natures, palsies our best faculties, shocks them into inaction like an electric battery. Before, in a healthy state, it acted, it moved without "speech or language, its voice was not heard." Now, its voice is loud and piercing. Before, it was a defensive, guardian, conservative power within, stimulating us to higher action. Now, it is dreading difficulties, and hurries us into them. Thus a man's own fear, when it once assumes a wrong position, gains an undue energy in and control over him—brings exposure and danger.

This is the sentiment of the text, and illustrations of its truthfulness lie thickly scattered all around us. We will consider the fact affirmed, that fear unrestricted, fully roused and controlling, does really bring danger; and then briefly refer to the method of properly silencing fear to which our text alludes: "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, shall be safe."

Let us take it on the lower grounds first. A man's fear brings him into danger when it becomes controlling in the matter of mere physical exposure. Even here, a man who would walk safely, must walk fearlessly. The sailor who would climb the tapering mast, or run out upon the yard arm, while his ship is heaving beneath him, and threatening to leap like a maddened steed from under him, must banish fear if he would go securely. He looks down—he begins to weigh his danger, to estimate his chances, and at once

his hangers increase. The workman that treads the roofs of lofty houses, venturing to the very edge, doing his task so securely there aloft where his stature is almost dwarfed—he alone is safe. The sleepwalker will tread the most dangerous paths—will stand in the most aerial positions in safety, simply because he has no fear. Let him awake—let his fears be roused, and his energies are palsied. He falls like a weak infant. A man without fear can do anything above the earth that he can do on it. It is a man's fear that brings him into hazards.

Apply the sentiment to common worldly affairs, to the making of money, and while it is true here, that rashness is hazardous, and brings many a man to poverty, it is yet as true that timidity and excessive apprehensiveness keeps still more poor that might be rich. A timid man who never ventures anything; who never sends a ship out upon the sea, lest she should be wrecked; who never builds a house, lest it should be burned; who never puts stock in bank, lest it should fail, never can be rich. He may creep timidly around the outer edges of wealth, he may cast furtive and greedy glances upon it, he may enlarge his desire for it—but it will never be his. He lets his *would* wait like a slave upon his *dare not*, and so he, like the sluggard, “desireth and hath nothing.” A wholesome venturesomeness is the first condition of all prosperity. A man's fear brings him

into poverty as surely as his sloth or his viciousness. Or take one of those timid men who, by some apparently kind providence to him, but by some terribly severe and disastrous providence to his neighbor, has inherited wealth, and his timidity makes a strong box into which all his dollars are thrust. Ask him to give, and the fear of poverty, that haunts him like a nightmare, clinches his grasp of his gold. His fear paints the future in sombre hues. With all his wealth he is poor. He is a miser, not perhaps by nature, but he is made so by his excessive apprehensiveness ; and many a man with stores of silver, has madly been his own murderer, for fear that he and his might come to want.

A man's fear of his fellow men, often brings a snare. We are kept back from doing what our understandings and our consciences demand that we should do : we are hindered from the entertainment and the expression of honest opinions and convictions from our fear of our fellows. There is many a young person, and for that matter, many an old one, who is deterred from avowing his interest in religious concerns by the fear of ridicule. There is many a man who would be a noble and true man—true to his higher and better nature—true to his best aspirations and highest wishes, if it were not for his fears. He dreads the frowns, he dreads the loss of favor or patronage, he dreads the poverty which might come upon him-

self and family. He dares not be a man, because of his fellow man. In his closet, in his better, more noble moods, he longs to be a man, and show himself a man exercising a higher intelligence, a stern conscientiousness, a noble Christian freedom; but he leaves his quiet retreat, he comes out from his contemplations to meet and mingle with his fellows, and he dare not meet their ridicule or contempt or alienation, and so practically he becomes a merely conventional man, taking his direction and ultimately his very opinions from others—begging, like a poor spaniel, leave to be, from others as poor and ignoble as himself—dragged down by the leaden chain of dead conformity. It is hazardous to be a *man*, and so he ventures to be a *thing*. Many a man who stands at the altar, is a mere creature of the pews—above them, and yet cast up only by what of force there may be in them, made, shaped, moulded, unconsciously it may be, and yet really by others—daring no utterance that comes up from the deep places of a true heart, till he knows how it will take, dreading a frown from a pew, as he would a pestilence—vacating the rights of a man, the right to think and speak for himself, for the paltriest wages. There is no country where public opinion has such sway as in ours. We are glad that it is so. We would not have it otherwise. We are not governed by bayonets, by kings, by tyrants. Public opinion sways everything. It makes and unmakes presi-

dents and cabinets. It sends its mighty tides up into all the sinuosities of public questions and interests. And as we said, we are glad that it is so—that it lifts men to power, and then casts them down again. It is our peculiarity and our glory. But on the large or the small scale, we are not to allow it to assume the ascendancy over us, and become our tyrant. Our fellow men, singly or in masses, we should honor and love, but we are not to vacate our power to think, conduct, act in their presence. We are not to allow our fears of what they may or may not do to or for us, to sweep us away from our integrity. A man's fear of his fellows may make him a very slave. It often does; and when it does, when in the narrow sphere of the church or the village, or in the broader theatre of a state or nation, the voice of the people is to us the voice of God, the crown is plucked from our brow, we have abjured our freedom, and sold our birthright for a mess of pottage. Our fear has caught us in a most fatal snare. When a man takes the fear of his fellow men as his counsellor and guide, he is no longer a free man—with a mind excursive, elevated, true; he, a plastic, fluent material, casts himself into earthly moulds to be shaped by them. He is of the earth, earthy.

We have so far spoken of a man's fear as affecting his thoughts, and feelings, and course, with reference to this life more particularly. We have seen that it

brings him into dangers. I now go up to the highest of all concerns—to the formation of our religious opinions—the adoption of our religious course—indeed, to everything that appertains to our connection with the beings and interests of the great hereafter, the invisible world; and I say that so far as mere fear, mere shrinking, trembling timidity controls us in the formation of our opinions, or in the adoption of our course, we fall into a snare. Our religious opinions and interests are infinitely our highest ones. Tell me what a man's religion or no religion is, and I will tell you what he is. Nowhere is half so much calm, mature thoughtfulness demanded as here. Sometimes in awakened minds, minds that have been rent as by galvanic shocks from long-continued stupor, fear gains and occasionally keeps an awful ascendancy. Fear sends its own messengers into the vast unknown, to bring back their own tidings, and they bring such tidings as such messengers alone can bring. Sometimes fear with raven wing broods over and strives to encompass our entire eternity. It paints it all in the most gloomy colors. Fear shapes our God, our Christ, our heaven, our hell, our Bible, our deathbed. It shapes our religious opinions, our entire religious imaginations, feelings, and life. Of course, when it is left to do this, all is awry, misshapen, deformed. A soul left to the dominion of mere fear in religious concerns, will be subject to hazards, will fall into snares



terrible in proportion to the vastness of the scenes and themes on which it works. If fear is a bad counsellor and guide anywhere, it is doubly so in religion. Eternity left to be shaped by mere fear, will be crowded with terrors, will have no bright spots in it. The God that shall be enthroned being first formed by fear, will be a God that would fill a universe with dread.

Fear has a sphere, a fitting sphere, in the religious as in common life. In all well-balanced souls, it is a mighty, silent force, but in religion no more than in anything, is it to overstep its limits and gain the ascendancy. Left to control any department of life, fear controls it badly ;—left to control our religion, it moulds and controls it worst of all.

A religious creed that fear has made up, will be an awful one. A Bible that fear interprets, will be a terrible Bible, filled with thunderings and lightnings, like its own Sinai. A religious man that fear has mostly had the making and the shaping of, will be repellent of all sweetness. Religious missions or enterprises that fear has started and carried on, will have power, but they will be sharp, angular, thundering on like a steam engine, and with as little of pity in them as it. Fear in a man, fear consulted, predominant, does bring a snare, and plants the world, God, eternity, with snares. It would open maelstroms, and sweep

in its victims on the Sea of glass. It would cleave yawning chasms and pitfalls right under the great white Throne. Not fear, but love is the guide of all life, the interpreter of God and His book, of Jesus and His cross, of time and eternity, and fear acts as interpreter only to mar all it touches; and this brings us to the refuge from fear.

“A man’s fear bringeth a snare; but whoso trusteth in the Lord, shall be safe.” The timid man is among snares:—how shall he quell his fears, bid them sink down into their true and silent retreat,—how shall it be done?

Not by philosophy, not by determining that he will not fear, not by stupidity or recklessness, not by bold and ignorant assertions that there is nothing to fear;—not so are our fears to be stifled;—not so are we to escape the dangers into which our fears trusted as counsellors or guides will bring us.

There is another and a better way.—“Whoso trusteth in the Lord, he shall be safe.” In God as our refuge and our eternal home, with trust which puts the soul into His keeping,—trust which encompasses it with His strength, we are safe. Out of God, apart from Him, in hostility to Him, there is abundant occasion for fear.

A Godless man is fearless only through stupidity or recklessness. A man full of trust in God, is fear-

less in the exercise of his widest, finest intelligence. When once we have committed our souls for time and eternity to God through the Divine Redeemer, we have nothing more to fear. This world, and all worlds are safe places for us to walk in.

## XVIII.

### THE EARTHLY BURDEN, AND THE DIVINE SUPPORTER.

*Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.—*

PSALM lv. 22.

WE come into the region of true manhood, and we come under the pressure of burdens. We can escape them only by eluding our true nature and relations, by casting away the crown of our glory. The text assures us that we individually have a burden or burdens, it tells us what to do with them, and gives an assurance upon compliance with the direction.

There are individual burdens, "Thy burden." The intimation is that each person has his own burdens—those that legitimately belong to him, those that he cannot innocently cast away. These vary with our constitution, our mental scope, our locality and diversified relations. No two have the same.

Some take burdens that do not belong to them. They go out in earnest search after them, encompassed with eyes to see, with hands to grasp them. They roam over wide spaces to discover, and are open-doored to welcome them. Before they knock, all the soul's

avenues are flung wide open to give them entertainment. There is a surprising quickness in some persons to apprehend and to fence in burdens within their own enclosure. It is as though they dwelt in the centre of a whirlpool, and all came sweeping in diminishing circles into their souls. Now it is well to discriminate here, to see what belongs to us and what does not, to grapple the one, to hurl clear away the other. We are limited in our capacities, and of course we must be in our burdens. There is no virtue in being busy-bodies in those of other people, in going out after them, and seating them at our board. We cannot afford to keep a hotel where other people's cares shall find food and lodging. We should be willing and glad to entertain our own. *Thy burden*,—cast it upon the Lord, not others' burdens;—we should take our own, observing well what they are.

I am aware, indeed, that the number of persons who assume more than their share, is comparatively small. The multitude act very differently. They refuse to take their share. They are quick to turn them away when they come. They refuse to enter the paths where they lie. They elude them, giving them a wide berth. They go tripping and dancing through life, never rising into the region of true manhood, because they never take up the responsibilities of men. Life to them is a dance through May-fair; it is a butterfly-flitting from flower to flower; it is a

vapid, meaningless thing, to be crowded between an insignificant birth and as insignificant a death with as much thoughtlessness as it can hold. This class that strive wholly to cast off burdens, is a very large one.

There is still another class that elude their own responsibilities and assume others', going away from home, and even entering into and dwelling in other people's houses, their own burdens all rolling off from them, hitting them perhaps, but certainly glancing away from them; and others' cares coming to them in crowded phalanx. A sign might be put upon the souls of many people, "Vacant rooms without price, to be filled with other people's burdens,—the legitimate occupants away from home." They have no conscience disengaged for their own responsibilities, because they are so crowded with those of others. They go flying all abroad to find out and embrace their neighbors', and have neither time nor space for their own.

Now ranged between these two, is the class who honestly and in the fear of God, knowing and feeling that they are men and are willing to stand in the lot of men, see and bow to their own burdens, not taking more nor less than is theirs in the wise appointment of their Maker.

We have burdens simply as men, under the Divine government, immortal men beginning our eternal ex-

istence,—to shape the course and determine the goal. We have personally to accept the responsibilities of our position. We cannot commit them to others, to pope or priest, to parent, pastor, or friend. We throw them off and they will not stay off. We are men and we must be what we are made. We must take our nature as it is with its tasks and its duties and its infinite issues. Being men, we cannot be beasts. The burden of preparation for a life with God is on each, inwrought into him, not by possibility separable from him. It is the great, the common burden, putting us on a level,—amid our endless diversities of gifts and position, substantially uniting us. No thoughtlessness, no self-assumed duties, no entanglements of earth, no flight, no outside affairs, can relieve us from it. Till God unmakes us, this is the great common burden resting on our souls, like the air upon our bodies,—this of preparation for the life that is to be.

Then apart from these burdens that rest upon us in our individuality, there are those that devolve upon us in our relations to others. We are parents, and we have burdens as such, the burden of young fresh life that has sprung from us—our souls and our bodies, that we are to nourish and shape ; life for whose trickling thought and feeling and purpose and taste, we are to dig channels, and send on their way toward the great sea. These burdens are sweetened and made precious by our love, but they are great and they are

ours. We cannot delegate them to teachers or pastors. They are made ours, by our nature and our relations.

Then there are other burdens as patriots. We are interlinked with our fellow countrymen, our children are to be sent into the future, we have stakes in our country that is, and that is to be, in all that affects its weal or woe, in its unity, its peace, its true glory. What it is affects us, what it is to be affects us. It is safe,—it rises to a higher and nobler position, casts on the canvas of the future a horoscope of an exceeding greatness, and we are glad. It is exposed, its glory is eclipsed, it is rent and torn by intestine feuds, and we are sad. When our country is in danger, we cannot dwell in the centre of indifference, cherishing the spirit of heedlessness, careless what happens if we can escape from the wreck. In such times as the present especially, the burden will come home to us, and we should feel that we were less than men if we should desire to elude it.

We have burdens as Christians. We send our thoughts and sympathies out over our neighborhoods, towns, states, nation, the world. What we see, what we hear affects us. Our very sympathies that make us men, as they fly abroad and brood over our fellows, gather in burdens that come home as they return and rest with us. We can shake them off only as we deaden our hearts, and this we feel is eluding them at too great an expense. We are not willing to be



unfeeling for the sake of being free from burdens, any more than we are willing to be blind for the sake of escaping the unpleasant sights that greet us, or deaf for the sake of avoiding the grating discords that strike the ear. What well-equipped, well-trained spirits gather in and bring home on their excursions into the realm of manhood and the wider realm of God, that they must be content to take. We must receive and assume our own burdens.

But having taken them, let us inquire what we are to do with them, all sorts and all degrees of them. The text tells us: "cast thy burden—*burdens*—on the Lord." Observe, we are to take them, not flee from them, not say they are not ours and we will not have them. This will not do. Cast them upon the Lord before we assume them, before we feel their weight pressing us down, feeling and saying that they are His and not ours! Not so at all, but taking them all home, stretching ourselves to embrace them, feeling their weight, and then after they have become ours by actual adoption, casting them on the Lord. It is a very fine elusion of our manhood to see burdens coming like clouds with their dark banners all spread abroad, and then darting out of the way; saying they belong to some one else, belong to God. This is miserable poltroonery, to cast aside and away a burden that seems too heavy for us before we even feel it. It is the burden that we grasp as with hooks of steel,

the burden that we pile up on our own souls, and whose full pressure we realize by making it our own, that we are invited to cast on the Lord; not the one we have shirked and skipped lightly out of the way of as it has passed by. "Cast thy burden"—the one that you have made yours actually, cast *it* upon the Lord.

All life affords us analogies operating in this direction. We all take burdens that we *feel* incompetent to bear, that we *are* incompetent to bear. The relations of life are established that we through them may gain relief from them. The husband is abroad, engaged in business, gets entangled in its meshes, becomes harassed, perplexed, knows not whither to turn. He gets little relief abroad. Debts annoy, bankruptcy scowls on him. He goes home weary and worn, sad and disconsolate. He tells his wife, he lays his strong business soul on her weakness, wraps that distempered, anxious heart of his in the drapery of her affections, and on her sweet smile his shadows float away. He has cast his burden upon the angel of the house. Perhaps the prattle of a sweet babe is the escape-valve of his solitudes. Many a child with its tiny shoulders bears off, like the victim of the Jewish economy into a land not inhabited, the burdens of a weary heart. We are always availing ourselves of the tender relations of life to cast off our burdens. A care shared by a sympathetic spirit that really feels with and for us, is half taken away.

"I loved the weight I had to bear  
Because it needed help of love.  
Nor could I weary, heart or limb,  
When mighty love would cleave in twain  
The lading of a single pain,  
And part it, giving half to Him."

God has given us these tender relations, these angels of our homes, and circles of friendship, not to shut out Himself, but dimly to prefigure our higher relationship to Him, and to set forth our higher privilege of sharing our burdens with Him. He is ever with us, by our side, our Almighty Friend, our Divine Father, imposing burdens upon us, making us feel their terrible weight in part, that we may gain an impulse to come to Him through our absolute necessity. Cast thy burden, whatever it may be, on the Lord; not the burden that does not belong to you, not the one that you have needlessly assumed,—*that* you are to cast into the depths of the sea, cast anywhere; but the one that is absolutely yours and you feel that you cannot bear alone, cast it upon the Lord. That is your privilege and that you are invited to do.

And what is the promise if we thus come and cast our burden on the Lord? It is this—"He shall sustain thee." You will observe the pith of the promise. Cast thy burden on the Lord,—and what then? He will take the burden, relieve thee wholly of it, bear it all Himself, and send thee away free and light?

Not so at all. That would be no real blessing to us. That would not make and keep us men, it would rather make and keep us children. The promise is rather this, "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He shall sustain thee." He will not take the burden wholly away from us, but He will sustain us while we bear it. He leaves us with it and yet He helps us while we carry it. And this, we feel, is what we want, and, on the whole, all that we want. Take the lower relations of life. When we cast our burdens on each other, as we so often do, it is not that we may escape responsibility. The husband that goes home to pour his weary heart into his wife's,—the wife that longs for the return of her husband that she may lighten her burdens by his sympathies; neither wishes the other to take off the pressure of duty, neither expects the other to take his or her obligations and toils. The husband does not desire the wife to go to his counting-room on the morrow and conduct his business, or the wife the husband to remain at home and regulate the domestic economy. Each expects to remain in the assigned sphere and do the assigned tasks. It is for help, for sympathy, for the relief that comes from the scattering of the clouds, the oiling of the machinery, the impartation of inward strength; it is for this that the burden of the one is cast upon the other. By this, true manhood and womanhood are preserved and made stronger.

And so when we go and cast our burdens on the Lord, it is in no vain and weak expectation that God will take off our burdens and carry them Himself, or send some angel to carry them for us : He could only do so by divesting us of our true power. Our burden of preparation for Heaven, our burdens as parents, as neighbors, friends, patriots, Christians, we must bear still, and bear on to the end. No being in the universe, not even God Himself will or can bear them for us. There can be no such transfer.

This is what God will do when we cast our heavy burden upon Him. He will hand it back to us, rebind it as with rivets upon our souls ; but then He will, when He recommits it to us, give us strength to bear it. It shall come back to us when we roll it upon God, but it will come with a Divine energy accompanying it, so that while it seemed ready to crush us before, it shall come winged and buoyant to us now ; while insupportable before, it shall seem light now. It was a dead weight when we carried it alone ; it is a living and delightful one when we carry it with God.

We may not escape burdens, but we need not carry one of them alone. We may have no wife, no husband, no earthly father, friend, to share them, but we have a Divine Father standing by our side, tender, amid all seeming severity, with us when the pressure is heaviest, inviting us always to cast our burdens

upon Him. We shall not go taskless through life, but we shall go with the feeling that our tasks will not prove too absorbing, our burdens too crushing. God will not take the crown from our brow by assigning us no burdens, He may keep us to our dignity by putting heavy burdens on us ; but He will sustain us in them all, and help us to bear them to the end.

## XIX.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIESTLY FUNCTION.

*We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.*—COLOSSIANS i. 3.

THE word *and* here, had better be rendered *even*. "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The God of the Apostle and of all Christians, is not some unknown and unknowable Being that comes to us in name, but without qualities—a mind, possibly, but without a heart; stirring our fears, it may be, but not our hopes. No. The God that we have to do with, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, the God of all grace, apprehensible in Christ, conversable in Him, passing Himself into the moulds of our thought and feeling through Him, starting out of His darkness, coming into the light in Him, knowable and lovable through Him.

A God out of Christ, may be the God which nature reveals, but a God in Christ, is what the Gospel reveals,—Christ's, the Immaculate man's, Father, and through Him our Father. Christ does not make

God, does not change a quality of His mind or heart. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He did not make Him a kinder, more merciful and placable Being, did not put one generous and tender feeling toward our race into Him. He simply revealed Him. Self-revelation is one of the highest wishes, the most earnest solitudes of Jehovah.

Neither let any one suppose it an easy thing for an infinite Being to get Himself adequately before His creatures,—roundly and fully pictured to them. Even we do not find it easy to get ourselves fairly before another self to whom we wish to be known, on whose mental retina we wish a fair image of our veritable selves to be painted. We often are mortified to find that after living beside one, and perhaps with him for years, he does not understand us,—we have to explain and re-explain, and after all fail to impress our purpose upon him. If it is so with us, it is surely still more so with God. The revelation of Himself is the most difficult of tasks. He could not do it in nature, He could not do it in language. He took a different method. He made Jesus, He poured Himself into Jesus, He set Him up as the image of the invisible, the intangible God; and now our God is the God in Christ, His God and Father, and our God and Father through Him and because of Him. This was the Apostle's God, and this is ours. We do and can know no other.



Now to this God so revealed and so related, Paul gave thanks and prayed. No other God comes into the arena of our thought and feeling ; no other elicits our thanks or encourages our prayers. No other God strikes out and maintains a distinctive personality before us, evokes our gratitude for favors bestowed, or draws up our thoughts in prayer to His Throne. No other than the God in Christ announces distinctively a personal good will toward us, a personal thought and care for us. The God of nature is too remote, uncertain, hidden, moves on too lofty a plane, is too cold and isolated, is wrapped too much in His works, is too little apparently concerned for us to stir our gratitude, and surely He bends too little to our souls to give us much confidence to pray.

I say not that we should be left without sufficient denotement of the Divine goodness in nature to elicit our gratitude. I say this :—that our gratitude would be likely to be as cold as the gifts of such a Being are general and impersonal, and our prayers would be a dark *perhaps*, sent on a hazardous venture, which might gain an auditor and win an answer, but the thanks and the prayers alike would stray up into a vast empyrean to strike, we could hardly know where, to bring back, we could scarcely know what. A God out of Christ is rarely saluted with an “I thank Thee!” and rarely pestered with a petition. It is the God,

even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that we thank, it is He to whom we pray.

But the peculiarity of the thanks which the Apostle gave, and the prayers which he offered in the text, is this,—that they were for others, for his brethren at Colosse. These two thoughts will claim our attention.

*First*, the thanks he gave to the Father of Jesus for his Christian brethren. He had heard of their faith in Jesus, of their love to all the saints, of their hope laid up in Heaven ; and hearing of their Christian graces, his heart is kindled in gratitude to God. Like favoring breezes, the news passes through the chords of his well-tuned soul, and it swells up with the music of thanks to the ear of God.

Now it is not only true that all Christian graces, that we may see in our own souls, working there and working outwardly in our lives, stir our own gratitude to God as the Being that begat them,—they having no spring in our fallen natures ; but what is more to the point in hand, it is no less true that these graces, when first meeting the eyes of others that live in communion with God, and are on terms of intimacy with Him, stir gratitude in their hearts to God also. Every soul that trusts in Jesus with a childlike trust, every soul that loves the saints with a pure love, every one that is sustained with a divine and immortal hope in the trials of life, every one that goes forth to do Christian deeds, every one that gives to the needy ones of earth, that

teaches the ignorant, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, that does one work of charity ; every such one not only sends up his own thanks to God that he is permitted and inclined to do it, but he, at the same time, puts every other child of God into a grateful frame, and inclines them all to send up thanks to the Father also. There is the feeling of complacency in the person that we see doing such things, and cherishing such feelings ; but there is also the gratitude which we feel to God for it all. There is a double joy, operating manward and Godward, a twofold cord binding us to men and to their Maker.

The truly disinterested soul is gladly responsible for its own and for all others' gifts. It takes the light and glad burden on itself of thanksgiving for its own and for others' good things, for its own and for others' graces. And this is indeed one of the tests of our participation in the Spirit of Christ,—that we are not only grateful for the blessings conferred upon us, but for those also bestowed on others.

The heart that has not been touched by the Spirit of God, and regenerated thereby, is capable of gratitude. We never allege of the natural heart that it cannot see, recognize, and be grateful for Divine blessings. Let God keep filling his garner with plenty, let Him compass the worldling with all pleasant surroundings, keep him and his in the ruddy glow of life and health, and he even may send forth his thanks to

God who has used His power to serve him so well. If God will use Himself and His resources to envelop him with good things, he will not refuse to return his poor gratitude. But the selfish man's burdens of responsibility in this regard, stop with himself. He is grateful simply for worldly good in his own circle, and scarcely for that outside that circle. For all spiritual blessings that come to our race through Christ, for all the humble trust that sustains the children of God in the dark passages of life, for all the sweet Christian graces that fill their souls with peace and their lives with goodness, for the hopes that strike into eternity and run parallel with its existence; he feels no gratitude springing up to God. He assumes no responsibilities which are loved and cherished in this direction. That others trust, hope, and are glad in Jesus, and live as disciples should, makes him not thankful to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But every true follower of Jesus is glad to recognize all the blessings of others; those that have their chief results in this life, those that embrace another. He is a high-priest, to go into the Holy of Holies before God, not with the blood of victims to make expiation, but with the incense of joy and thanksgiving ascending from many hearts, and from his own most of all for the good conferred on others. He offers it there before the Lord. Thus every partaker of the

Spirit of Jesus, feels a personal gratitude for all the good which the Master bestows. There is not a drop of rain or dew that falls on the earth, there is not a ray of sunshine or starlight, there is not a bending head of grain waving in the autumn, there is not a scene of grandeur that meets any eye and steals into any soul, there is not a lofty thought that soars above earth and penetrates the sky, there is not a hope that makes earth brighter and life sweeter, there is not a quiet Christian example that is lived in remote hamlets, there is not a broader and more responsible life that as a pillar bears up the social or political fabric, there is not one gift of God that crops out in any human soul now or along the track of the ages, for which he does not feel grateful to God. This burden of gratitude which he feels for others' good things, for their Christian graces and lives, is not a burden that presses him, but like the weight of the atmosphere, it is one in which he lives and loves to live.

This priestly function is one that we hardly realize as we ought; this obligation to feel grateful for all the blessings conferred upon others. There are hundreds in this city that have been the objects of the Divine care and of the Divine bounty the past week. They have been in health, and their wives and children have been about them. Death, sickness, want, have not touched them. If the pestilence has walked in darkness, it has not come nigh them. They have

had blessings and abounded. But many amid them all have recognized no God, they have bowed no knee in the family morning or evening, they are in no sanctuary to-day, with their praises, they have received good things as the brutes do. But what then? Shall God have no thanks for the blessings sent upon them and theirs? Shall these bounties descend upon those about us, and there be no returns sent up from hearts that have seen and recognized them, and been glad in them? Shall these persons be spared and blessed, and these homes be filled with health and gladness, and not a soul be wakeful, watchful for them, and send up thanksgivings for them? No, my Brethren! We should have our eyes up to mark the opening clouds, out to see the falling blessings, the continued health, peace and life, and if the immediate recipients have no thanks to send up and back to God, we should catch them on our own waiting souls, and send up in their behalf the gratitude which we feel, but they refuse to give. For all the benefits conferred on man, God should receive thanks, if not from others that know Him not, then from us who see and mark them.

There is a sort of priestly function here which every Christian sustains,—a burden of gratitude that others will not pay, but which we should be glad to pay. Watch for the manna that descends around the tents of others, and while they go out to gather it

without a thought of God, do you take up the delinquents' gratitude and bear it to the throne, so that God shall not be without some incense of thanksgiving for all that comes to our race from the full garners of His goodness!

But in the *second* place, and on this thought I can dwell but briefly,—the Apostle not only speaks of thanks given for them, but of prayers offered always in their behalf. We are more prompt far to fill the priestly function of prayers in others' behalf, than we are that of gratitude for benefits bestowed on them. But I wish you to mark the connection here between the thanksgivings Paul sent up to God in behalf of his brethren and the prayers he offered for them. It is when we are grateful for the blessings given, that we are stimulated to ask for more. Just as when we are grateful to God for the good things He confers upon us, we are more likely to obtain others for which we ask, so also when we gratefully recognize mercies bestowed upon others by the good hand of our God, we are more likely to obtain the things we ask in their behalf. The child that remembers what his father has given him, will be more likely to obtain more; so the one that looks to what God has done for others, will be more likely to receive for the asking further benefits in their behalf. Looked at in the mere light of policy, it is well to be grateful both for our own and others' blessings. If it is legitimate to ask for further

blessings for others, it is surely legitimate to thank God for what He has given them. If I want my brother to have more hope, sweetness, love, generosity, it is well to acknowledge all that God has given him now. Prayer always goes up with a power when it goes with a recognition of what has been already done. This puts our souls in a kind, receptive posture, makes them prompt to see and appreciate all there is good in the souls and lives of those for whom we petition. "Lord! thou hast done such good things for them. We thank Thee. Now do more. Thou hast brought them to such a degree of goodness; thanks be unto Thy name for it. Bring them to a still higher degree. Thou hast given them some holiness,—perfect it, and crown all Thy other gifts by the gift of eternal life!"

Thus thanks and prayers go together. We can put our souls under personal obligations to God for all the good things He bestows on our fellows, and then out of our thanks we can educe an argument for our prayers. Prayer flies on the wing of thanks to God and reaches His ear. We pray powerfully when we are heartily grateful both for ourselves and others. Let us perform for our fellow men the priestly function of giving thanks in their behalf, and we shall perform that other function better of prayers in their behalf.



## XX.

### THE GIFT AND ITS USE.

*But every man hath his proper gift of God.—1 COR. vii. 17.*

*Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God that is in thee.—2 TIM. i. 6.*

IN the first passage we have a fact affirmed,—every man has his own peculiar gift from God ; and in the second, we have a duty inculcated,—stir up that gift that is in thee.

There is a gift, my friend, in you. You would not have been here in God's creation without one. The fact that you are here, settles the fact that you are here for a purpose, and that you have endowments of some sort to consummate that purpose. Find them out and use them.

Let us dwell upon the fact affirmed, and the duty consequent upon it.

Every man has his proper gift of God,—every man, be he ever so humble, ever so retired and relatively insignificant. There is not one bearing the form and lineaments of a man that has not some

special gift imparted to him by his Maker, some gift that distinguishes him from all others. Some stuff enters into his composition that enters into that of no other man ;—some gift that makes him significant and important in the world, and in the universe. Out of the infinite resources of God, something was taken to make this man, that was not taken to make that. It marks him off, parts him from his race, makes him a distinct and immensely weighty unit in the great sum-total.

It is a proper gift, just the gift which it is best that he should have, and best for others that he should have. It may be a gift for speech or silence, for thought or action, for high imaginations, for lofty enterprises, for noble endeavors, or for holy and retired duties ;—it may be the gift of stillness, of rest, of patience, to sit in quietness, to watch in the dawn with God's sick and feeble ones ; it may be the gift of cheerfulness, of sunny and innocent mirth, a gift to lubricate the grating machinery of life, to stir gladness in hearts when the curtains are drawn and gloom presides ; it may be the gift to tend and care for little ones, to bear their foibles and fretfulnesses, to present a velvety surface to the jagged and crabbed inequalities of little or big souls ; it may be the gift of business ; it may be a gift that runs out into invention, to devise and embody in tangible forms machinery that will the better help on the race in an advancing

civilization. It may be a conspicuous or un conspicuous gift; it matters not, it is a proper gift, a good gift; it comes from the mint of God, and with His stamp upon it. It is good for the purposes for which it is given,—on the whole, just the best one that could be given by a wise and munificent Creator.

God had the residue of the Spirit,—an infinite amount of unused creative power, of material that He might have made up into souls. He might have made you larger and packed more into you, but He did not, because on the whole, He did not think it best for you or others; for you as a unit, or for you in combination with others. The wisdom of God was exerted in each man's construction, and in the original qualities of his mind, he is constituted as God would have him.

Now this gift, this special gift of God to us, be it what it may, we should seek to find out. We should use all the aids and appliances possible to discover it. Our life-work will not rise like a star upon us till our special gift of God is found. I do not say that it is an easy task to discover what our special gift is; but the matter is greatly complicated by our perverse ambitions, by our sloth, by our selfishness. If in godly simplicity, with receptive hearts, standing in God's light, with spirits up to Him, and open to receive His inspirations, we would seek to know our gifts that we might exercise them just where and as God would have us, we should find it less difficult to

ascertain what our gifts are. We too often want to do what we were not made to do,—what we have no aptitudes for doing. We range out of our sphere. We are at cross purposes with our own faculties, and the Divine plans with respect to us. We want to do what we have no commission to do, what we cannot do, and what our fellows do not want us to do. We are out of line, and do not march to the music of God's harmonious creation. The world is a jumble, and we increase the confusion by getting out of place. We want an easy time, and we find very hard times. We want to move on certain wonted grooves, where we shall be sure of many eyes, and we make terrible work of it, because we were not made with wheels to fit the track that we covet.

Best are all things as the mind of God intended, and the hand of God ordained. There is a man and a gift for every place, and harmony comes when every man and every gift finds its place, and quietly abides there. We shall find our gifts when we are willing so to do, and to fall quietly into our place. God does not mean that any gift that He has put into any man, shall wander off not knowing where to go or where to locate itself. We shall find our special gift when we are willing to see it in God's light, when with the simplicity of a child, we are ready to say, "What am I, and what wilt Thou have me to do?" God knows our gift and He wishes that we should

know it, and He will lead us into the knowledge of it when we are willing to use it, not for present ease or advancement, but for His glory and the good of others. A gift—be it great or be it small, put under the leadership of sloth or unholy ambition is sure to err and come to no good. It can neither know itself what it can do, nor where its proper location is in the great sum of things. Let us yield our gifts up to God, consecrate them, lay them on His altar, and all the light of God will shine upon us to elucidate our gifts, and point us to their appropriate and fitting sphere of action. Every man has his gift, and every man should put it under the leadership of God that he may come to a true knowledge of it. And having it and knowing it as best he may, then comes the duty enjoined in the second passage in our text.

*Stir it up.* Stir it up to work where God wants it, and to do the service He requires of it.

Every gift needs to be stirred up to do its best. A forcible and sanctified will needs to go to its seat in the soul and grasp it and bind it down, harness it in and impel it forward, make it walk, run, fly, as the case may be, in its appointed circle. A gift out of harness, left to itself, is vain and useless, like water running to waste. It enlightens no one, helps no one, opens heaven upon no one, shuts the pit upon no one, makes no man live a more blessed life, die a happier death, and spend a happier eternity. The world is

full of gifts. Millions of souls are enriched of God with the most precious gifts that would make earth a happier place, heaven a fuller place;—gifts that would exhibit God and Christ in more glorious aspects if they were only stirred up. But alas! they lie in the souls of men, all unused, or so used as to help on the sad discords of the world;—gifts lying like dead giants in their graves, or alive, but running athwart the best interests of society, and harmful to their possessors. We should consecrate our gifts and then stir them, put them on their true course, whip them up, put spur to them, and make them do their best. The world does not lack gifts, it has enough of them. They want to be stirred up.

The complete equipment of society and the Church demands that we all stir up the gift that is in us. Society as a whole, the Church as a whole, a society within a society, is an organism. It is made up of many members. There are gifts in society, in the Church, to do the work of both. God did not make any man to be complete in himself, but in his fellows. All for each and each for all. No man is his own. No man's gift is his own to be used for his own weal or pleasure. No man is to use his gifts to gain personal advantage, or conspicuity, or fame; but being part of a great organism, he is to use his gifts for it. There is no lack of gifts, and there is no superfluity. All are needed for all, and society at large, the

Church, is only equipped for action, for doing the great work assigned it, when it can command for its use all the gifts of its members ; when it can bring them all into service and use them for its own blessed objects. And when a man withholds his gifts, keeping them out of the common stock, setting up business on his own account, or when he refuses to stir up his gifts, allowing them to lie dormant in his soul, he is doing a wrong to the society or the Church of which he is a member. He is leaving it measurably shorn of its power, and incapable of doing its work. The true state of feeling is the one prevalent in the Church at the time of and subsequent to the mighty outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when no man deemed aught that he possessed his own, but all Christ's and all his brethren's—all for use.

A gift, great or small, used not at all does the world no good ; used for mere personal ends it helps on the jar of the world ; but held sacred for the service of God and the Church, stirred up perpetually for high ends, "hasting not, yet resting not," it equips the Church for doing its work of showing forth the Divine glory in the salvation of souls.

We get the most of personal advantage out of our gifts when we stir them and lead them out under the dictatorship of disinterested affection. We get the most out of them for ourselves, for our own happiness, for our own true elevation, our own lasting

repute when we so use them. Happiness is only faculty all used and rightly used. Misery is faculty unused or misused. A soul with all its powers on the alert, moving on some lofty course of duty, under the guidance of God, is doing the very best thing for itself that it can do, doing all that any soul can or ought to do. The soul is often smothered by its own sour unconsumed smoke. A man is like a horse,—put him to his mettle on a free course, get out of him or let him get out of himself for high ends all that is in him, and he likes it. He may come to his goal reeking and dusty, but he comes to it happy. No man can do the best thing for himself till he stirs up all that there is in him, puts it all under the guidance of God in one blessed act of self-consecration, and then does with his might what there is in him.

Gifts will grow if they are used, but they will only grow harmoniously and well, yielding blessed fruits of joy and peace to their possessor, as they are put under Divine law, are stirred up by Divine impulses, and led forth on some sublime errand of duty or of suffering for God or our race.

“Stir up the gift that is in *thee*.” The address is not to the mass of disciples, but to each ; for each has his proper gift of God,—a gift of which each is the steward, and for which he will be held to a strict and personal accountability. God prizes each gift of us all, for His own wisdom devised, and His hand created



it. He holds each gift bound to His throne, and He does not and will not let it go. Wander as far and wide as it will, He will summon it from its wanderings back to His throne to give an account of its stewardship.

Brethren ! we have deposited with us our several gifts of God, prized of Him and not to be despised by us. We are not to spend our days in idly bemoaning that they are no greater or more attractive. They are ours, just what we find ourselves with, just what we have to work with, our capital to put to use as best we may for our Maker and for the world. We are not to bury them in a napkin against the coming of our Lord. The non-use of our gifts is the abuse of our gifts. Slothfulness meets condemnation as well as selfish action. We are members of society, of the Church ; and society and the Church, with all the voices of their deep needs, summon us to use our gifts, to stir them up. Thousands in the Church are weary and sad, gloomy and despondent, because they are not stirring up their gifts, or else are using them for selfish ends. The Church generally, the Church specifically, is languishing because she cannot command for her high uses the gifts of her members.

You who have just joined the Church, I summon you to consecrate and then stir up the gift that is in you ! Be it small—it matters not. God wants it. Stir it up, and make heaven a little fuller, and yourself more blessed through its use.

## XXI.

### THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

*As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*—1 PETER, ii. 2.

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*—2 PETER, iii. 18.

TO grow in grace, and to grow in the knowledge of Christ mean nearly the same thing. We grow in grace when we advance in piety, in true religion. No word, no idea ought to be more familiar to us than that of growth in spirituality, in likeness to Christ. Past attainments cannot serve us. We rest on them, and we wither and become weak and emasculated. We can only be strong and joyous as we go on growing more and more day by day.

It is alike our privilege and duty to grow all through life. Though our outward man may perish, though our intellects become torpid and stiff, yet our hearts may become more and more mellow, devout, loving and sweet.

I propose now to speak of the conditions of spirit-

ual growth, assuming that growth is practicable. I shall confine myself to general conditions. What are the conditions of growth in the Divine life ?

First and most important of all, lying at the basis of all, we must be *in* the Divine life if we would grow in it. God's seed must be in us. We must have passed through that great change of which the Saviour spoke when He said, "Ye must be born again." We must have entered into the kingdom of God by simple faith in Jesus. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The flesh cannot expand into the spirit, nor the fleshly man into the spiritual, by the merely natural process of expansion. There must be something superinduced upon the fleshly man to make him pass into the spiritual. He must become the partaker of a new, even a Divine life. Be this now and always understood and believed. We must pass out of nature into grace, come under Christ and into Christ, become a partaker of the Divine influences that emanate from Him for the quickening and expansion of depraved humanity, ere we can grow or begin to grow at all.

Having become partakers of the grace of God which is in Christ, and possessors of the Divine life in germ, we have come under the very first condition of growth. The Divine life being engendered in the soul by the Holy Spirit, it like all life has within itself the law of development, of expansion. There is nothing

which has life at all which has not wrapped up in it such a law. It is one of the things that everywhere distinguish life from death. Death has no power of growth. It tends to dissolution always and everywhere. Put it where you will, subject it to any influences, that is its one all-conquering tendency—dissolution, decay. But life always tends to growth. You place a living body, a living seed, anything living, under the proper influences, and it will develop and grow till another and higher law prevents it.

This law of growth with which all life is invested, is the only efficient cause of growth. Take away it, and you might place it in any situation, subject it to any influences, and there would be no growth. The life of God in the soul of man has this universal characteristic of life,—a tendency to expand. It enters the soul with it, is a part of it. All the will in the world would not create it. Things do not grow because we will them to grow. Who by willing can add one cubit to his stature or one faculty to his soul, or a law of quicker growth than that which is implanted within him? I am not now speaking of the way in which the Divine life is begotten within us; whether with or without our will. I am only speaking of the law of growth which comes in with the Divine life, let that life enter as it may. The Divine life has just as much a tendency to grow as the natural life. A child of God as naturally develops into a

man of God as a child's body develops into a man's body. A Christian does not have to go down into the dark recesses of his own soul and beget and nourish the law of growth. It is there when he becomes a Christian. His business is far removed from the creation of such a law. He has no more to beget the law of growth in himself, than he has to beget such a law in the corn he plants, or the child of which he is the father. All the Christian has to do is to comply with the conditions of growth, the law of it being already in him. The Christian grows not by his will, but spontaneously, as the corn or the grass grows in the field. He might as well create life under the ribs of death as bid anything within him grow. That is God's province, not man's.

It is not sufficiently dwelt upon that at the very birth of the soul into the kingdom of God, there begins to work this law of expansion, and that if we do not grow in the Divine life it is because we impede the action of this law, just as some nations and tribes by constraint and clamps hinder the growth of certain members of the body. We check, restrain the law, and so contract great guilt. There is life within us with all the laws of life, and we stop its advancement. Under the appropriate situations and influences which lie within our sphere of choice, we should on becoming babes in Christ grow up into men in Christ, as surely as the seed develops first the blade, then the

ear, and then the full corn in the ear. We have not to work away down among the laws of life of which we know and can know little,—but up in the light where we may know all,—just as the farmer has not to go beneath the surface to beget and watch the laws of growth in his seed, but only to work on the surface where he may know all that he can or need do. It takes a Liebig to study the laws of vegetable life, but any peasant can produce corn enough to feed himself and family. So it might require more than an angel's knowledge to study the laws of spiritual life and growth, but the tiniest and weakest child of God may grow up into the likeness of Jesus.

This then is the first, the great condition of growth in the Divine life,—that we have this life, that we be born of the Spirit, that we be Christians. Without this there is and can be no growth as Christians.

Having thus spoken of the law of expansion which exists in all Christians from the time that they become Christians, a law which begins to operate with the first dawnings of Divine life, and will continue to operate so long as it is permitted to do so, I would now add that the *second* condition of spiritual growth is the removal of obstructions to the natural and spontaneous action of that law of growth of which we have spoken. I have said that from the beginning there is a tendency to expansion in the Divine life. That tendency comes from God without our will. It is ours

to see to it that we do not check it by interposing obstacles, or allowing obstacles to be interposed.

Christ in the parable of the Sower speaks of some in whom the seed did not bear fruit. "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and it becometh unfruitful." The Saviour here recognizes the law of growth, and that that law would have acted if it had been allowed, but it was hindered. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches were the hindrance. They prevented the spiritual life from doing what it had a tendency to do—develop itself more and more till the individual should arrive at the stature of a perfect man in Christ. The body may be put into an iron mould, and thus be hindered from growing by the force of outward pressure. The seed that we plant in the earth we may cover with stones or permit thorns and weeds to grow up and choke it. In agriculture a great part of our business is just to permit the law of growth to have free play, to war continually with all obstacles, not doing so much directly to make the plants grow as to eradicate all that would hinder their growth, leaving them to come to perfection in their own time and way. So in spiritual husbandry,—we have not so much to do in cultivating our piety directly as in removing the hindrances to its expansion. It will grow under the appropriate conditions, if we do not permit the vital forces, all the energies of the soul to be drawn off to

nourish other and hostile growths. If the soul's powers are absorbed in other things, of course piety has no room to grow. The law of its expansion is overborne, and for the time being crushed. It is as impossible for it to expand, notwithstanding its tendency to do so, as it is for the wheat to grow in the field which is overgrown with thorns. Piety must have room in the soul, it must have faculties, powers vacated, left free by all other tenants, into which it may strike its roots and whence it may draw succulence. A soul into which a thousand worldly cares and interests come thronging in thick phalanx, has no room for piety to enter, or if it does enter, it must be content to occupy a corner, and draw a little support thence, while the main faculties are given to other things. Piety has no chance in such a soul. It would die if it were to grow. Religion proposes to enlarge the soul, of course it must have a sacrifice. The soul must give itself over to God for it to try its powers upon, and do what it can do. Having free scope with the other conditions of growth, it will grow of its own law and develop more fully. Growth in the Divine as in the law of expansion may be removed, but without spirit. All life expands and



comes to perfection with due nutriment seasonably administered. You may starve the Divine life as well as choke it. A soul conversant with a few stereotyped thoughts which run forever in the old grooves, can never furnish a home for an expanding spiritual life. In such a soul *it* like everything else in it, must be shrivelled and dwarfed, resembling the herbage of a desert where life struggles with death in perpetual battle. Religion will shape itself to the soul, will expand and will be shrivelled with it, moulding it, and also moulded by it. A cramped, pinched-in soul will always exhibit piety in its most mean and unattractive aspects. In such a soul it may run into fanaticism, into a blind and chafing scrupulosity, and will not, cannot shine out in its own native loveliness and beauty, born of heaven and free of the universe.

If you would have an attractive, commanding, o'er-mastering piety, you must have ordinarily an attractive, commanding and o'er-mastering soul for it to enter and to occupy. The man in a sense makes the Christian. A small man makes a small Christian, a mean man a mean Christian. Piety when it comes into a soul has to take what it finds. If there is little stuff to work with, it makes what it can out of it. Men of the world complain that the Church exhibits so few bright and shining Christians. One reason is that the world furnishes such poor materials to make

them out of. If the world will furnish better materials, the Church will furnish better Christians. Give us great, generous, noble men, and we will show great, generous, noble Christians.

And then, too, when the soul, such as it is, has come under the power of the Gospel and is regenerated, nothing wants nourishment more than it. Piety being light struggles for light,—creeps toward the narrowest loop-hole by which it can enter. And there is nourishment for the souls that have been born into the Divine kingdom. There is bread in our Father's house for His own children enough and to spare. There is a Book full of the very seeds of truth. There is an Ichaboe whence we may draw nutriment for all the plants of righteousness in the soul. We are not straitened and pressed in on all sides by God, but in our own selves. No one can say that his spiritual nature is starved in God. He has provided the amplest stores for the healthy development of the children He brings into His kingdom here, and will exalt to His own glory hereafter. And if our piety is to grow, we must resort to and feed on these stores, *all* of them. It takes a whole Bible, nay, I should not be extravagant in asserting that it takes a whole universe to feed and nourish a whole Christian, for to be a whole Christian is nothing more than to be a whole man, a man developed upward, downward and around, heavenward and earth-

ward, Godward and manward, a man linked to God and his fellows according to their worth and relations. And it takes all truth to develop a whole man, all truth that is lodged in the Bible, and all truth that is lodged in that other book of God—His works. The Christian that would grow into the highest possible spiritual life must feed all his soul with the appropriate nutriment, which God has made to nourish it. He must feed wonder, love, hope, joy. He must ply his whole nature with the entire circuit of truth. He must stretch his cords on this hand and on that. He must elicit his powers by all truth and all beauty. And one great reason why the spiritual life within us does not obey its own law and expand into a freer and more noble and symmetrical growth, is that we do not nourish it with all the food that God has laid up in store for it.

A *fourth* condition of spiritual growth is one also common to all life, namely, *exercise*. It is a rule of all God's intelligent, and I might also add, unintelligent creation, that "to it that hath shall be given, and from it that hath not shall be taken away even that which it hath." Stagnancy is, or soon tends to, death. Movement is the condition of breathing and expanding life everywhere. Shut the infant up, fetter his limbs, exclude the fresh light and air, and you doom him to infancy. Leave the intellect unexercised for a few months or years, and it stiffens into rigidity,

and becomes almost incapable of expansion. So it is with piety. If we would have it grow it must be called into action and be kept in action ; not action in one line of things, lest what was intended to grow symmetrically should bulge out into deformity, but action in all lines of duty, action moving through the whole circuit.

The piety that would grow must keep itself in full and vigorous play. It must be out on the fields of earth gathering in the harvests of God into His garner. It must not be always working indeed in the street, in the sabbath-school, in the prayer-meeting, in the dwellings of want and woe and affliction, else would it have no time to feed itself by prayer, and reading, and meditation ; but working and feeding alternately and together, it will grow stronger and stronger, till mature and full-grown, it shall pass into the light and life of heaven.

These, I think, are the four main conditions of Christian growth. The life of God in the soul, with its law of expansion wrapped up in it ; the removal of all obstructions to its growth, giving it free, vacated powers and faculties of intellect and heart, to seize and hold as much as possible an unincumbered mind ; then copious and liberal nourishment drawn both from the works and word of God, putting the whole Bible and the whole creation into the mind to stretch it, to elevate and widen it ; and then, lastly, giving

it will stop for action in just such a world as this, where there is so much to move its pity, stir its energies, involve it again, and subvert it again.

Let us simply win these practicable conditions, let watching not just to see it grow, but always summoning it to the school and severely questioning it; let teaching it reasonably and sympathizing as we treat life elsewhere, and it will advance more and more. Spiritual childhood will pass on into spiritual manhood. There is a Divinely appointed way of progress, and conditions of growth. Divine life has its methods, as well as other life, and this removes it out of the sphere of miracles into the sphere of regular events. God will not interpose and smother these methods. We shall no more grow when the soul is crowded with cares, than the wheat when it is choked with briars. We shall no more grow without nutriment than it, or without exercise than the intellect expands without it. Let the life of God be ours, feed it, exercise it, and it will grow so long as the ordinances of God are as they are.

## XXII.

### THE AUTHORITATIVENESS OF CHRIST'S TEACHINGS.

*And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.—MATT. vii. 28, 29.*

IT was at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, that the people felt and probably expressed their astonishment at Christ's doctrine. Here was a new man on the earth, clear as the light of the sun, fresh as the morning dews, knowing man, knowing God and His truth, discarding musty traditions, idle babblements, smiting home to the very core of the matter, and revealing at a stroke, what it really concerned men to know—the real blessedness of life, what we must be and do to be true men, and to win true men's goal and reward. With the vision of a seer He saw, with the fearlessness of a prophet He told, where the true blessedness of man lay: not in walking the circles of ceremonious religionists, but in being meek, pure, lowly, peaceful, generous, forgiv-

ing ; in meeting a rebellious world in stern antagonism, and dying for principle ; in being right-hearted, liberal-handed, devout, true, good. The people who gathered to hear Him, heard something they had not been accustomed to hear. They did not well understand Him, He was so out of the usual track of teachers. "They were astonished at His doctrine."

It indicates a sad lapse from all right instructions that such aphorisms as fill a large part of this sermon, should have awakened astonishment, but so it was. They had been accustomed to listen to the Scribes, the learned men, the religious teachers of the nation, and their teaching was little more than dry bits of Rabbinical lore, stale, flat, and unprofitable, stirring, feeding neither mind nor heart. Christ's teachings, they could see, were entirely different in matter and manner, substance and form. He taught different lessons, and He taught them as one having authority.

We are not to allow any wrong associations to cluster around this word *authority*, as though in speaking with authority, Christ spoke in a stern, imperious, harsh manner. We sometimes, perhaps generally, have such associations with the term, and with the persons to whom it is applicable. When one speaks with authority, he too often repels us. Now there was nothing stern or repellent to the simple-hearted in Christ, and when the people saw and said that He taught with authority, it means simply that He spoke

as one who had a right to speak, one who was commissioned to speak, one who spoke out of the intuitions of His own soul, from the sight of his own eyes, the hearing of His own ears, first-hand not second-hand, certainties not guesses, observations not reports, out of the depths not from the surface of His nature.

There was something, doubtless, in his whole being that indicated unmistakably that He was not dealing in notions, speculations, but in substantial verities that struck home to what was deepest, best in man—the conscience, the loftier sentiments, the heart.

As there is an unmistakable difference between what is significant and what is insignificant, what comes from speculation and what from intuition, what is guess and what is certainty, so there is an unmistakable difference in the manner in which the two are uttered, if we only have discrimination to see. A true soul, like a false soul, has its own manner. The tongues that God loads with revelations and then inspires to utter them, stir the air differently from tongues that Satan freights and sets in motion. The authority with which a good man speaks, is as different from the authority with which a bad man speaks, as the tone of an angel is different from the tone of a blusterer. As Christ had better and greater things to say than the Scribes, so He said them differently. Divine matter found a Divine style of utterance.



And so the very style of Christ impressed the unsophisticated multitude. They could not analyze His power, but they felt it. They could not tell why He affected them. The Apostle gives unity to their loose thought, and words to their secret feeling, when he says, "He spake with authority," and so gives the clue to their astonishment. *They* felt it—*he* names it. He spoke with authority as a Heaven-appointed, and not a self-commissioned, Teacher.

And this is what the world needed then, and what it needs still, and what it ever will need while it shall stand—some one to speak to it with authority, as from God, as from eternity, to speak not guesses but facts.

This is in some respects a knowing world, a keen, intelligent race of which we constitute a part. I would not disparage, but suitably magnify human power and intelligence. It searches many things; it finds out much in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, in the waters under the earth. God has given us far-darting thoughts, excursive powers that cannot be and should not be limited. He has put us here to act indeed, but to act intelligently,—our thought pioneering the way for our hand, our thought running before, ploughing up the immense field of possibility. God elicits thought—stirs up His creatures like a bird her birdling, to take narrower or broader swoops into the airy domain of thought. He pricks

us into thought by the sharp goads of stern necessity. He does not mean to spare us in this matter. We must think, or we forfeit our birthright. We must think, or we can neither win nor hold the mastership of creation. We fail or cease to think, and the beasts that we were appointed to rule, mount higher than we. It is think or die, and God does not mean to tell us much that we can find out for ourselves. He beckons us on and up to higher and still higher problems. He sets easy ones for children, harder ones for men. He geometrizes, and writes His figures in stars and star-dust scattered over immensity. First, the problems of every-day life. We must think—think to get bread and butter and home and shelter; think to find out means of locomotion; think to lift ourselves and others out of barbarism; think to live a decent, comely life, to make earth a safe and commodious tenement to live in till the grave opens for us, and our souls go out into still larger homes.

And then we must think higher than earth to get over it. It is found that we cannot cut pathways safely over the deep, except as we study the stars, and so we have to scale the skies, and watch the celestial light-houses—God feeding their flames,—if we would carry merchandise over the deep. There is no safe traffic without astronomy; and so by our lower needs, God inspirits us on to higher studies. And in these lower and these higher departments, God tells

us nothing. He pays due respect to the powers He has given us. He lifts us over no rough places that we can surmount ourselves. He bridges no chasms that we can span. He levels no mountains that we can scale. He sees that we can do many things, more than we even imagine. He plants a beckoning universe before us, and tells us to enter and traverse it. He knows that wherever we can find a star on which to plant our foot, we will make a ladder, and with suns and systems as its rounds, we will scale création, going up and out to its limits.

But while God honors our powers by enticing us out into His material creation to search and fathom it, He honors us still more by beckoning us out into the spiritual realm, where to the eye of the body all is dark, and where the soul only can see and hear with its anointed eye and its listening ear. But we cannot go off into that realm without helps. We want some spots at least of light—some stars by which to direct our way—some helps to sustain our tottering steps—some slight teachings to encourage us to go out and traverse it. And so He has given us helps. He has commissioned One who knows all, to come and teach us not all that He knows, but the alphabet of eternity, the first truths of the spiritual realm, and that Teacher has come and He has spoken to us, some things, not many, not all that we might covet, but enough; and He has spoken with authority, and this is what we

want. We could guess, but guesses are nothing. Souls once housed in clay, might speak, but their utterances might not be reliable. We want one who has looked over the illimitable range of truth, and knows what to select for utterance. We want one who has searched the depths of our natures and knows when we need light and help. We want one who knows God and can picture Him,—set Him at least in miniature before us, set Him correctly, with no deficiencies and no surplusages, before the world's eye. And we have such an one in Christ. He knows whereof He affirms, and He speaks like one who knows.

This is what the world covets—authoritative utterances, decisive revelations on these great themes; voices from one that knows, and that should make us know, so far as He shall deem it wise to communicate. When the Bible says, then, that Christ spoke with authority, it says what we should expect with reference to a Divine Teacher. He must leave us with the clear conviction that He looked right into the spiritual world, into God, into man, and spoke what He saw and knew. Anything short of authoritative utterances, would have come short of the world's needs and demands.

Authoritative speech from Christ is the only effective speech, really, lastingly so. Men love to have men speak to them in an authoritative way,

always provided that the authority be well based, tender and loving. We like to get at souls that know, and wish as little as possible to do with such as guess and conjecture; we like men of science, knowledge, not men of mere notions. Men, indeed, run after quacks, pretenders, but it is generally through mistake and misapprehension. Quackery is often, perhaps generally, pretentious, making a great din, and attracting much notice. It can speak with a noisy, shallow authority, but quackery is known of her children. God does not mean that simple, true souls should take noise for sense, pretence for worth, false authority for true. Wisdom is justified by being first recognized and known of her children. True men love true utterances spoken by such as know them true.

The testimony of adepts is more or less decisive in and out of courts of law. When we find a man skilled in his own department, we heed him. We are always seeing with others' eyes, entering into all kinds of business on the seeings of men who we think can discern farther than we can. No one can see far all around. We are all very much like the African buffalo, which can see dead ahead a considerable distance, but not ten yards on either hand. Men see in the direction they take, in the direction in which their powers run naturally, and we listen to men testifying to what they have seen and known. You know one

thing, perhaps more,—but your testimony is available in your own line. Mechanics see in their line, physicians in theirs, lawyers in theirs, and their word is more or less authoritative, as they are more or less highly endowed and skilful. Yet none are infallible. None speak with absolute truth. But Christ, in His department, in those things on which He speaks at all, speaks infallibly, authoritatively, and His word is effective only as He so speaks.

Doubt Christ on the themes on which He speaks, and your soul is crippled. As His speech is infallible, so your faith must be unfaltering. A wavering reception of a true word is as disastrous as a sure reception of a dubious word. What men want, is certainty, and this they cannot have within the realm of spiritual and Divine things, except from an infallible and authoritative Teacher. Man can satisfy man within his own realm, but not outside of it. All religions springing from human thought, human reason merely, fail to hold men. They are not binding. They have no authority. The voices that are to draw men to the spiritual world, must come from that world. The influences that are to lift above earth, must come from above earth. The teachings that are to grapple men and lift them, must come from a more than human source. Men are affected, drawn and kept out of and above themselves, by a power emanating from Heaven itself.

After all, men do love to be dealt with in religious matters authoritatively. Truth must be mandatory. It must come home with a stern, imperative, *This is true, and you must heed it*. Take this and heed it, and obey it, and you will be saved; reject it, and you will be damned. If Christ's word has had any power on the world, it has been as an authoritative word, a strictly infallible revelation of truth and duty within the sphere it pretends to cover. If it is to have power in time to come, it must be in the same way. The authoritative word is the potent word in this world.

This authoritative speech of Christ will never become obsolete, and never can be superseded. I know not what new light is to come to us from God. This I am not competent to decide. But of this I am assured, that no new light will supersede or obscure the light that has come to us from Christ, and for this reason mainly, that His speech was authoritative on the themes, and within the sphere of its inculcations, and so it was final. He spoke to us of God and our relations to Him, and God and our relations can never change. He spoke to us of eternity, and eternity never waxes old. He spoke to us of man, and man in his great original traits, is the same as when Christ spoke to him. The truth on all these themes is not affected by the lapse of years. Centuries wear the mountains, and they come to nought, but they alter

not the eternal truths of God and man. The Sermon on the Mount is as fresh and beautiful to-day as when the lips of Jesus first parted to utter it in the ears of the multitude. So long as man is what he is,—so long the words of Jesus will be to him what they have ever been—the brightest jewels of our lost humanity. Jesus may become the obsolete Teacher of the world when a new God ascends the throne, when a new Law issues from Him, and a new Saviour tabernacles in clay. Till then, Jesus will be the fresh, unctuous Teacher of the race, speaking to every succeeding generation of men in the same tones of authority that he uttered to that gathered throng of Jews on the mountain slope of Palestine.

We, indeed, can never speak on religious themes with the same decisiveness and authority as Jesus did, except as we simply repeat His words. And yet even we may speak with a degree of authority on the high themes of the soul and its salvation—of God, and of Christ His Son—of all spiritual and eternal things. As we take the things—the words of Christ, or rather as the Holy Spirit takes them and shows them unto us—as they pass through us working their Divine work in all our faculties—as they are woven into us—as we come to realize them in our own experience, and to live them and show them forth in our daily lives ;—we too shall begin to speak of them



with authority. The thing we *live* is the thing of power. We speak truths that we have not lived, and there is a hollow ring to our speech. We speak the truth that we have wrought out in our own souls, and we speak "as one having authority."

## XXIII.

### LIGHT AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES.

*For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ;  
walk as children of the Light.*—EPHESIANS V. 8.

THIS is said to a whole church, one of the purest and best that crowned the labors of Paul. They *were* darkness—they *are* light, not in themselves—that is impossible, but in Christ, and they are exhorted to walk as children of the light. These are the thoughts lying on the surface of the text.

These Christians were once *darkness*. The word is expressive and emphatic—not dark, but darkness, the abstract darkness, is used to set forth their former state. This is said in part with reference to their former position as Gentiles—outside the pale of Jewry, unvisited by any of those fainter illuminations that rested upon that favored land. With respect to any true knowledge of God and of that spiritual world of which He is the centre and glory, they were all darkness. They groped as men would do on the earth if sun, moon and stars were stricken from the sky. The material world would be a reality, if it swung a cold

and silent, dead thing in darkness; but no living creature, upon the presumption that life could be sustained in it, could find his way over it. He would move in terrible mazes—wander as in endlessly winding labyrinths to no end, no goal. The spiritual world might be a reality—its monarch might sit on its central throne—his servitors of other orders might move in their lofty spheres, run their sublime errands, come to their goal; but if no light from it shone upon our world, we should pass our days in darkness. In all intellectual apprehensions of it, in all the impulses that came from it, in all the breadth and force it could give us, it would be as though it were not. Now this was the fact with regard to the Gentiles. Darkness brooded over the vast realm of the spiritual. They were shut in to the material. If thought ever wandered into the domain of the spiritual, it went without a guide; if a question was ever dropped into it, it was like a pebble dropped into ocean's depths.

It is not relevant to the subject to pause and ask how this darkness came upon them—whether it was a Divine judgment visiting them for personal violations of duty, or a disciplinary regime needful for the education and ultimate elevation of the race. With the fact, not the reasons of the fact we have now to do. They were darkness.

The statement is not true to the same extent with reference to such as are here under the light of the Gos-

pel. However they may treat it, the Gospel does give all some illumination. It does cast some radiance over God and the world over which He presides. Men may shut their eyes, but it is hardly so dark under the glare of the sun, as in the darkness of midnight. Some rays ever will steal in through the closed lids. Men here and now can hardly be as benighted as in heathen lands in regard to spiritual verities. And yet how often is it the testimony of those who have come to see themselves and Christ, and eternal realities—those who have sat under the sound of the Gospel from their childhood :—"we were in darkness, we groped even at noonday, we did not see, we did not hear, the spiritual realm was all shut out from us and we from it. We heard with the hearing of the outward ear, but we did not understand." It is among the simplest and most obtrusive facts of life, that here where we are, now in the day in which we live, the vast mass of men have no quick perceptions of spiritual truths, no vivid realizations of them. They move all encompassed by them, and yet they penetrate not to the seat of their life to quicken and draw it into their own higher sphere. The inner ear is dull—their eye have they closed—they are in the broad blaze of the Gospel, and yet in darkness. Again, I say, I have at present to do with facts, not with the reasons of the facts. Men all about us are in darkness, peculiarly so with reference to their own highest interests;

if they were not, they would not, could not act and live as they do wholly for the seen and temporal, not at all for the invisible and eternal. That which affects, moulds men, they see and are alive to—to that which does not, they are dead.

But the Apostle speaks of a change, a transition from darkness to light. Ye *were* darkness—ye *are* light. Reference is here made not to the agencies, whether Divine or human, or both, by which this transition was secured, but simply to the transition itself. Ye were darkness with respect to all the higher truths of the Divine realm—ye are light!

In the natural world, we are accustomed to these transitions from darkness to light. We stand on some hill-top in the gloom of night when clouds cover the heavens—the garish day gone, and none of the glories of night visible. We are wrapped in gloom, and our spirits take their hue perhaps from the brooding darkness. The within and the without correspond. We stand there again when the sun has wheeled up the eastern sky and flooded all the extending panorama with his light, and how great the change! But this is slight, compared with the change that comes over the soul when it passes from a state where this world was all illumined and the other all dark, to one where the other is all irradiated and casts a fresher, brighter glory upon this. There are such changes, sometimes sudden, oftener gradual, like the rising light that

shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And this, I say, is among the common experiences of life. There is nothing removed from the simple sphere of the senses, and the sights to be seen there, on which a wider range of testimony could be elicited than this—that persons who were once dark on this whole matter of the spiritual life, are now light. They could tell little how the change was brought about, but they could assert, “whereas we were blind, we now see.”

Neither is it out of the range of the common analogies of life. We are constantly ourselves passing from darkness into light—coming to see beauties, important realities that before were nothing to us. Our souls are like apartments in an inn. A guest comes and retires to this room, another comes in and goes to that, another retires to a third. Guest after guest arrives and is shown to his quarters, and at length all have come and all retired. Before the morning dawns, the servants tread the corridors knocking here, knocking there. Sleeper after sleeper rouses from his slumbers and hurries on his way, and to his tasks; but it is long ere all are roused. Most of our souls are filled with powers that are like guests asleep: God’s servants come and knock and rouse power after power, but it is long ere all are awake—perhaps none are all awake. The trump of God Himself alone will stir all the faculties that sleep within us. Not till then will any of us

come into all the illuminations, cover all the area of thought and action for which we are capacitated. It is true, however, that we are ever coming, on specific subjects, with respect to important departments of life, out of darkness into light. We were darkness—we are light. We did not know about that subject—we do now. We were not alive to that interest—we are now. We did not know that person—we do know him now. That rich soul living close beside us or coming in upon our beat from far, was all a hidden mine to us but recently, now it is revealed to us and we are digging in that mine. We are perpetually making transitions from darkness into light;—how should it be thought strange then that, with respect to the most important interests of all, we should be making transitions from darkness into light? Ye did not see—ye now do see; ye were darkness—ye are light.

But you will mark that the Apostle says, “Ye are light in the Lord.” This is a most important statement or qualification. If there was a transition from darkness to light, it was not by any light introduced into and inhering in themselves, but by a light wholly outside of themselves, in which they stood and saw; and that Light was the Lord or Christ.

The difference between a land in spiritual darkness, and one in spiritual light, is the difference between a land without Christ and a land with Christ;

and the difference between a soul in darkness and one in light, is the difference between a soul that sees with its own light, and one that sees in Christ's light. Most of what we know about God, Christ communicates. He came to reveal the Father. Most that we know about the spiritual realm, He has told us. Most that we know about ourselves and our future destiny, comes from Him. He is the Light to the world, and they that are in Him and walk in Him and they only, are in the light.

*Light in the Lord.* In the natural world, God makes certain bodies fountains of light; we pass beyond their range, and we pass out of light, we exclude ourselves voluntarily, or are excluded from their radiance, and we are in darkness. We allow the prerogative of God here—to illumine the material worlds from such centres of light as He has made for that purpose. We do not claim that God should illumine us from anything, or from nothing. We are glad to go where the light shines, and to see within the range of the bodies that are the depositories of light.

So in the spiritual world, Christ at least to us is the Illuminator. God has made Him the Depositary of light for us. If we see, we see in Him, if we are dark, it is because we are out of the range of His light. The Spirit, in all its workings within us, does not import light into us and put it on deposit—not so at all. It is not the work of the Spirit of God to



create light, or to be the orb from which it shall emanate upon our souls. He neither makes light, nor imparts it directly. He, in this matter, is mainly a guide. He takes us by the hand and brings us out of darkness into light—the light that already shines. He does not make Christ, but reveals Him to us—enables us to see Him as He is—"the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He anoints our eyes, not to see something that did not before exist,—not to cast more intense glories about Christ—not to add one iota to His brightness, but just to see Him as He is—the Light of our world and our race. We are led into Christ, and when we see Him, we have passed out of darkness. We are light in the Lord.

But there is an exhortation growing out of these truths.

Ye were darkness—ye are light. The light shines wholly from Christ the Lord. *Now walk as children of the light!* On the theatre of the natural world, we see what vast opportunities and vast responsibilities are involved in the possession of sunlight. We see that we can and are expected to do in the day, what we could not do in the night. It is in the light, not in the darkness that we do all the work of life. A world in darkness would be rolling like a cold, dead, rough thing: a race in darkness could never serve itself or others. So in the spiritual world, we can

and will do nothing in the darkness, but all in the light. We are in the light now. The Dayspring from on high hath visited us. Our eye has been opened to see, our heart illumined by the visitation of Jesus the Light of our world: we should walk as children of the light.

It might be claimed that we do so on the ground of gratitude. Of all the gifts of God, this is the greatest—light shed on Himself—the clouds removed from those interests that most concern us—themes standing clear that were once obscure—the way of pardon and peace all opened; what vast blessings these! What shall we render to the Lord for them, all? This first and most, just to walk as children of the light, not as though we had it not. The illumined have a walk unlike the benighted,—let them observe it, and thus give the sweetest return that lies within the compass of their ability. We are in the light—we should walk as children of the light, lest we lose the light we have. The light itself, indeed, will never grow less. Christ is, like Him whom He came to unfold, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He will ever shine with not a ray obscured. But it is one thing to have the light in the world, and quite another thing to see it. The best way to see the light more and more, is to walk in it. Walk in it—walk toward it, stationary in body, yet progressive in soul, moving on swifter and still swifter

wing toward Christ the great Light : He will fill more and more the soul's vision with His beauty.

Ye have it ; —walk in the Light as *children* of it, as though you were to the manor born, as though you were not once aliens, clear outside of it, but as though you were the born children of the Light. That is the beauty of it, that we come into the possession of Light, and may walk in it as children walk in the light of a home. The very light of God will grow dim to us, if having it, we fail to walk in it.

By the fact then that we have the Light, by the fact that we are the children of the Light, by the glorious fact that we who were sometime darkness are now in the light, by the fact that the light is given us not to gratify our curiosity but to live in, by the other fact that it will grow dim if we fail to walk in it, and will brighten more and more untò the perfect day if we do walk in it ; by all these considerations, let us, my Christian Brethren, placed where we are—let us walk in the Light. The Father of Lights from His Throne bids us so to walk. It will be a walk of peace and an end of glory.

“ Walk in the light ! so shalt thou know

That fellowship of love

His Spirit only can bestow,

Who reigns in light above.

Walk in the light ! and thine shall be

A path, though thorny, bright ;

For God, by grace, shall dwell in thee,

And God Himself is Light ! ”

## XXIV.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE DEPENDENT ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

*Because I live, ye shall live also.*—JOHN xiv. 19.

THERE are what we may call great central lives, lives on which other lives more or less numerous depend. It might almost be said of whole nations in critical periods of their history, that their very existence depends on a single man. If he lives, they live, if he dies, they die. Institutions that have blessed and advanced the race, have been originated, and for a long time sustained by the efforts of single men, and even after these men have been long dead, their benefactions have been their support.

There is a projectile force to character, to moral influence, that impels it on to act powerfully on succeeding generations and among distant people. Both the good and evil that men do live after them. We all of us live in our characters and our influence. Being dead we yet speak. Christ was about to leave His disciples. He promised, however, that He would not leave them comfortless, but would come unto

them: "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ was indeed about to die, but the grave was not to hold Him. He would live—live a life above all harm or accident, far removed from all the power of His foes; a life eternal, glorious, in Heaven; and living Himself, His disciples should live also, live not a mere natural life of the flesh, for that was not necessarily to be continued, because Christ lived, but live a Divine, spiritual life. The Saviour thus bases their life upon His own: He would live, and so they would live; His life none could touch to harm, and so their life none could touch to harm. There is needed but the life of Christ to keep their life agoing. Theirs would stop when and *only* when His did.

Christ enters not here into any nice discussions; He makes no revelation as to the manner in which their life was dependent on His own. This is a sphere in which had He attempted to introduce them, they probably would have been lost. It would certainly have availed little for their comfort in the dark night that lowered upon them. What they wanted, and what we want, is not nice discussion as to the specific methods in which our real, our spiritual life flows from and is dependent upon Christ, but the broad, outstanding fact shining out clear, distinct as the sun, and that fact Christ presents for their comfort, and not for theirs only, but for the comfort of all His people in all time, and as for that matter, for all eternity.

Traced to its ultimate analysis, we are compelled to the conclusion that all life is dependent moment by moment upon its Author. It is not given in large deposits, so that when the creature has once secured them, he can live apart from the Creator. It were equally unphilosophical and unscriptural to assert or believe this. The creature is never for a moment of his existence independent of his Maker. He lives entirely in Him, and sundered for a moment from Him, he falls and perishes. God lives, and because of this, the creature lives also.

This is so with respect to *all* life. It is certainly not less so in regard to the highest form and style of life—the Spiritual and Divine.

Christ affirms that this life is in Him. I will not stop to indicate the bearing of this declaration of Christ upon His proper Divinity. I shall not attempt to show how living and mighty a proof the existence of spiritual life is of the Divinity of Him who sustains it. I simply take the words of Christ, that in Him, both as to its origin and its continuance, this Life is. There is the fact—Christ lives; and there is the other fact—that His disciples shall live also. The one is interwoven with the other.

All life in such a world as ours, has its innumerable hazards.

“The moment we begin to live,  
We all begin to die.”

Death has been as potent as life all through the history of our globe. Mighty as has been the wave of life that has rolled, and still rolls over it, so mighty has been and is the following wave of death. If life has been vigorous and stirring, leaving its mementos thickly scattered in the earth, so also has death been as vigorous, following swiftly in the track of life, moving with it and undoing its work, so that nothing is so notable in our dwelling place as the perpetual, endless battle between life and death.

With respect to all lower and inferior forms and types of life, we can say that they have no assurance of continuance. God lives, but it does not follow that they live also. But with respect to the highest style of life, the Spiritual, it has an assurance of continuance on the basis of the simple fact of Christ's life. He lives, and *it* shall live also. Like other forms of life, and more than these, it has its hazards, its foes. It fights its battles, and but for the life of Christ, like these it would yield and perish. With respect to it only has Christ said, "I live, and it shall live also."

It is upon no weak and uncertain basis that our spiritual life rests. If it did, we might well fear for it, and fear for it the more, the more highly we regarded it. Raise one's estimate in the highest possible degree of this Spiritual life, and then make it dependent solely or mainly upon beings or things that partake of the uncertainties and mutability of

earth, and you excite the darkest apprehensions. In proportion to the value you put upon anything whatever, do you wish some permanent basis on which to rest your hope of its continuance. Deposit a comparatively worthless treasure in unsafe hands, and your sleep will not be broken ; but place your all in the same hands, and you will have little repose till it is rescued from them. Now with respect to our Spiritual life, Christ is its fountain, its depositary. It is hid with Him in God, to use another declaration of the Scripture. It is as safe as He is. If He is above all accident, it is. If no enemy can approach to injure Him, none can approach to injure it. If He is housed in Heaven above all the mutations of earth, so is it. He lives, and if we are His, we shall live also, live as safely, live as surely as He does, live while everything else that is not in Him, and to which He has not pledged perpetuity, goes down.

But it may be asked here, have we nothing to do with keeping this spiritual life agoing when once it is ours ? Because Christ is its fountain, have we no care of it ; because He is its guardian, are we not to watch ? Here comes up the old and ever-recurring question between our agency and the Divine agency in human life and conduct, about what we have to do, and what God has to do in human affairs,—a question in which I have less and less interest, because it is utterly insoluble. No human, probably



no angelic mind can fix the precise time when the one begins and the other ends. The fact is, neither has any definite limits. The human and the Divine are all interblended in all that man does ; God is in it all, and man is in it all. God is in us from beginning to end, working in us to will and to do. Christ is the fountain and support of our spiritual life, and this makes it safe ; we have some agency in its continuance, and this makes us *rightly* solicitous and painstaking. If it were a life out of some Divine and Omnipotent being, it would be one that we should dread to accept if it were proffered to us, and if it were a life for which we had no care at all, we should become heedless and indifferent. We have just that nice balance of dependence on Christ on the one side, and just that felt necessity of personal effort and watchfulness on the other, as will keep us from painful solicitude, and from destructive sloth.

Christ lives, and we live ; but all life is active, it moves in specific directions, it has an end and an aim that is lofty in proportion to the value and dignity of the life. A life resembling death, is no life, so that to preserve a spiritual life, though it be in Christ as to its fountain, that shall not beget action, the highest and noblest action in us, is to preserve a life that is not life at all. There need be no embarrassment in adjusting precisely what we have

to do and what Christ has to do in keeping our Divine life quick and active, simply because we are wise only as we attempt no nice adjustment of the matter at all.

As we have said, man cannot adjust it all now, and perhaps never. Paul says, "I live," and he stated a truth, and yet not the whole truth, for he adds, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He attempts no delicate tracery of the boundary between his own independent life, and the life of Christ in him. Both facts he assumes and believes. After his conversion, we doubt whether Paul spent much time in the effort to decide how much of that changed life which he lived was his own, and how much was Christ's. *It was all his own* in one aspect of it, and all Christ's in another aspect of it. In its outward, visible, presentable form, it was all Paul's;—in its inward fountain and perpetual inspiration, it was Christ's. It was a Divine life working through the powers and the life of the great Apostle. So with all of us that have this life;—it is ours, and yet it is Christ's, He in us, and we in Him; and neither here nor hereafter will there be any need of attempts to discriminate between our own and the workings of Christ in us. In that great day, when the just are gathered on the right hand, Christ will attribute all their doings to themselves, not so much solicitous to refer them to His own impelling and sustaining

power. "Inasmuch as *ye* did unto the least of these my brethren." And then on the other hand, there will be on their part, an utter abnegation and abandonment of all self-originating goodness and good doing, and an undivided and most hearty ascription of praise to Him who hath wrought all their works in them. In their estimation of it, their life will be a life all of Christ and all to Him, and through eternity, all for Him and His glory. "Because I live, *ye* shall live also."

What a preciousness it gives to the life of Christ, that the life of all true disciples hangs suspended upon it! The multitude of men that have no Divine life and no wish to attain it, may be indifferent to Christ. If we could suppose a man indifferent to what the sun in the heavens imparts, he would have no care whether the sun should rise another day, or go out to-night in darkness; and so, if there be any heedless of a Divine, holy life that is derived from Christ and depends upon Him, they will be heedless of Him. They will not care to hear of Him; they have no living, blessed connection with Him. But let one be earnestly desirous to live such a life—a life like that of Christ, a life culminating in the blessedness of Heaven, and then Christ will be all and in all to him. If we ever live a true, powerful, pure life, it will be in Christ. There is no holy life apart from Him. He is its fountain. We cannot have or keep

it ourselves. If we are in Christ now, then when He who is here and now our Life, shall appear, we shall also appear with Him in glory. The life that we live in Him now, is the pledge that we shall live with him forever.

## XXV.

### GOD THE SPRING OF ALL MERCY AND COMFORT.

*Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.—2 COR. i. 3.*

YOU may know where a man's heart is by marking the thoughts that spring to his lips in his freest and most spontaneous hours. Some men's natures are full of music, and they are warbling it in their souls, and, if their lips serve them, with these too all the day, while their dreams are in the world of song. Whatever is the sphere in which we circle interiorly, that is the one in which our tongues move also.

Now there is no mistaking what is the inner spirit of Paul, by watching the ready gushings of his soul, watching the words, the sentiments that first spring to his tongue when it is set free. "*Blessed be God.*" His heart is full of God. God is written on it. Said a French officer under the tortures of the surgeon's knife, "Plunge a little deeper and you will reach the Emperor," that is, if I interpret it aright, "Go down

a little farther to the very seat of life, and there imprinted indelibly, ready for your revelations, you will find the image of the Emperor whom I love and serve and follow even unto the death." So with Paul: on his heart was the image of his King, the King of kings; penetrating all his powers was the spirit of that King, his heart glowed with love, his life was filled with service, and when he spoke, his lips were filled with blessing. "Blessed be God!" Ask a man of simple, unsophisticated temper, a man that can interpret a simple heart when he sees it, and he will, he must say that such language as this is not the language of one who was bent on acting a part and making a show.

There are some things that cannot be counterfeited among hearts that, in their own experience, know what the true is and how it utters itself. Hypocrites deceive hypocrites by just passing a little out of their beat, and taking them on another tack, but downright, true men that have ever lived in the atmosphere of truth, all whose looks are moulded by an inner spirit of truth, all whose words have dropped since speech began out of a true soul, such know the sound of true speech when they hear it. Now these would know that such language as this of Paul had the true ring in it. "Blessed be God." That, in such a connection as this, comes from a heart that sends it spontaneously forth. Out of the abundance of the heart,

the mouth has spoken. *Blessed be God.* God is in the heart, and the heart is filled with yearnings that He may be blessed.

In one sense, we can add nothing to God when we bless, as in an important sense, we can subtract nothing from Him when we curse; and yet I am not sure, but that in our common thought of Him, and even in our loftiest conception of Him we make Him too impassive. God certainly cannot and ought not to be conceived of as indifferent to our feelings and speeches about Him. We are not to lift Him so out of the range of our sympathies, that we shall feel that He does not care whether our hearts and lips are filled with cursings or blessings. We are not to carry Him to such a height, that a curse shot against His throne will be received just as a blessing springing from lips that convey the sentiments of a full heart. The greatest man, the greatest monarch with kingdoms at his beck and myriad troops ready to start at the blast of his bugles, if he were walking the streets of his metropolis in disguise, would not be independent of the free, natural expression of the humblest dweller in that metropolis. We may take the man of vastest mental resources and physical power, and if in the darkness of midnight he should overhear the prayers of a simple cottager sent heavenward for him, he could not be indifferent to it. If he had a heart, such a prayer springing from such a

lowly spot would affect him more than the loftiest eulogies of smooth-tongued courtiers. And we do not exalt God when we so lift Him out of the range of our sympathy, as to make Him indifferent to what His creatures think or say about Him. He is not indifferent to it. He is not out of the reach of our hearts. Blessing and cursing do not affect Him alike. A Paul gushing out as he does in our text, does not affect God as another man whose lips are filled with curses. I am aware that neither affects His interior character, or His power, or His position, but if Jesus Christ fairly represents the Father to us, then the Father is filled with sorrow or joy at the sentiments we cherish toward Him. "Blessed be God!" does come up to touch certain chords in the Infinite mind which a "Cursed be God!" cannot touch. My heart rejects all ideas of the sort, that God is so independent of His enemies that He would be as glad with a world in arms against Him, as He would be with a world blessing Him. We not only affect our own position and our own character when we bless God, but we also do add something to His joy.

I am aware that many things may be said to the contrary about the independence of God and His exaltation above all human feelings or speeches about Him. The intellect may form its theories of God and so lift Him out of our range of thought, that He shall



sit upon His throne in the heavens as regardless of our feelings as one of those material orbs that sends down its rays upon us and never yearns for a "*thank thee!*" But the intellect was never made to interpret God, to find Him out even in such perfection as we may. All estimates, all scientific adjustments of His attributes formed by the intellect alone are imperfect, yea more, are false. The heart is the true interpreter of God. Not he that knoweth, but he that loveth, knoweth God. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." And love is not an impassive thing; it is delicate, susceptible, pliant in its very nature. Love moves to love, to listen to its call, turns to heed its praises, and to smile at the voice of its blessing. It is not weakness but strength to be so affected. All those views of God that make Him cold to our feelings, indifferent to our blessings, are not elevated, but low views of Him.

But we do well to mark the relation in which Paul viewed God while his heart was so filled with blessing. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." I do not know that there are not hearts that are filled with blessing to God as they view Him and get the estimate and measure of Him simply from His works, apart from all revelations of Him in His Son. I do not know but it may be so, and yet the records of the world scarcely have left the memory of such an one. I think the literatures

of all nations might be challenged to present a spirit like Paul's, or lips filled with blessing like his. Where in the annals of Christian nations can we find one spirit flowing out with such expression as this: "Blessed be God, the Maker of worlds, and the Ruler of their movements!" The truth is, God is too remote from human sympathy, too isolated as He comes simply in His works to us to elicit such gushes of love. He affects other departments of our nature elsewhere, but not our hearts. The wand that touches them is wielded by the God manifest in the flesh. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We are all familiar with the fact that some aspects of a large, rich character come home to us through one department of his doings and some through another. We all know that even a man cannot get himself fairly developed in one service, or act, or speech, or battle, or book, or picture. After we have seen a great man in public, we wish to see him also in private. The greatest single act of a man only presents him to us at an angle. The battle of Waterloo, and even all his campaigns in Spain do not present to posterity the whole character of Wellington. The great speeches of Demosthenes do not let us into the interior character of the man. The paintings of the greatest master do not permit us to see all there is in the soul of the artist. Sometimes the man is in his works, sometimes not. Sometimes we get little,

sometimes much of him from what he does. Sometimes he gives a section of himself up and down in an act, speech, work; sometimes only a stratum. Sometimes the intellect, sometimes the heart comes out in a given work. Sometimes what is in the background is in keeping with what is in the foreground; sometimes it is in dissonance with it. At any rate, it is very seldom that we get a man fairly before us by any one act or work. And when we come to God, it is surely no disparagement to Him to assert that He does not, cannot get Himself fully before His creatures in one work, or in a series of works, in one material world, or in a whole galaxy of worlds.

If Thomas Chalmers on his back on the parlor floor playing with his children, lets us into his heart more than all the majesty of his eloquence, if Daniel Webster under a tree on his farm in Marshfield, planted in memory of his son dying in Mexico—brushing away a tear as he points it out to the visitor, lets us into his domestic feelings more than all the march of his mightiest speech, if a man in his family circle permits us to see more of him at a single peep than in all his outside doings, surely we are not to say that it is a disparagement of God if we assert that we get into His heart more by one moment spent in the presence of His Son, seeing God in the mirror burnished for such a purpose, than we can in all the studies of geology or astronomy. The domesticity

of God—the Fatherhood of God is brought to view in Jesus as it is not and was not designed to be in all the works of His hands. Prove to me that nature is in the purpose of God a full revelation of God, and I will get from the study of nature such a view of Him as I can. But if nature is supplemented by another, and in some aspects of it a higher revelation, then reserving the lower for what it was designed to convey, I will study the higher for what it was designed to convey. We disparage no work of man when we take it for what it was made to impart, and we disparage not nature built by God when we study it for its conveyances, and then pass on to grace to study it for its conveyances. If two mirrors are set up before me to reflect God, the one to reflect some aspects of Him, and the other to reflect others, I will look into both. I will study God anywhere, everywhere, in His works, in His word, in His Son, and derive from each what I may. If the heart gushes with a more free and full “Blessed be God,” as I see and call Him the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, than when I see and call Him the Maker and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth, then I am only doing myself and Him justice when I go for such a purpose to Him in that relation and put my soul into communion with Him there. If my Father speaks in varied voices, I’ll hear Him in them all. I will not set one word of His aside while I give myself wholly

to another. I will heed them all. The blended utterances make up the harmony of His teaching. I will remember the works of the Lord, for "they are great, sought out of all them that take pleasure therein;" I will remember the word of the Lord, for it also is great. If my Father speaks in the majesty of the thunder, I will be out and hear Him there; if He speaks in the pity of the cross, I will be sure to hear Him there, remembering that I need in my sin the voice of pity more than that of grandeur. For in continuance the Apostle says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." It is as the Father of Christ that He indicates Himself to us as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

*The Father of mercies.* There is something striking and at the same time most touching and subduing in the phraseology, *Father of mercies*. Father of mercies, by being the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Father of mercies—the begetter of them—the fountain from which they all spring, Christ the channel in which they all run, flowing here, flowing there, irrigating a parched world like the streams of the East watering its arid plains. Father of mercies; no mercy in the earth of which He is not the Father. Find a mercy the world over—it may seem an estray, but it is not, it has a legitimate birth, it springs from one head, it has one Father. Father of mer-

cies ;—discern a mercy springing subordinately from a human fountain, a merciful look, word, deed, series of deeds ; give thanks to the man, but forget not God also, for it was begotten of Him. All human mercies if they be not counterfeit, will love to trace themselves up to Him who is the Father of them all.

It is to be emphasized that it is as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that He is presented to us as the Father of mercies and also as the God of all comfort. I have said that Christ domesticates God with us, places us in His world as in a home—a home full of sin, but then how fuller of mercies than of sin ;—a home full of sorrow, but then how fuller of comfort than of sorrow. We often see the sweetest traits in human souls brought out amid our sorrows, just as the brightest rainbows stand arched against the darkest clouds. We would not for much lose the revelations of our dearest friends that our griefs bring out. A man never knows his wife till she has lifted him with gentle hand out of his woes, till she has tended him through a severe sickness, and given that delicate touch to the pillow which her love knows how to give. And now it comes to pass that as we do not know our friends here till we have been in sorrow, so we do not and cannot know God till we have come where we can prove Him as the God of all comfort—all kinds, all degrees of comfort.

Do not let us lose the meaning of the phrase, *God*

*of all comfort.* Do not let us eviscerate it and reduce it to a mere figure of speech, taking the juice out of it. This passage means all that it says and more than we can get out of it. "The God of all comfort." In all His greatness, and it is the finest part of His greatness, he stoops, nay, he soars to comfort. The God of all comfort. I see a dewdrop cheering a thirsty flower, I know whence it sprang. I see a rill of comfort flowing into a sad soul, I know its spring—it came from God, and there is more in Him than has ever come from Him. God of grandeur, beauty, knowledge, power, wisdom, but also God of all comfort.

Blessed revelation ! and all through Christ. Let us take God in Christ home to our hearts.

## XXVI.

### THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*—JOHN xii. 32.

**A**LLUSION is made to a striking event in the history of the Jews. They were in the wilderness. They had sinned. The wrath of God was out against them. Serpents were sent to bite and poison. The voices of wailing, and the cry of the dying were heard in the camp. Terror and despair were in the hearts and depicted on the countenances of all. It was over the slain that Moses sang the solemn dirge :

“Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

“In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth.

“For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled.”

It was when death was on every hand, and the living were anticipating bodingly its speedy visitation,



that Moses was directed to raise in the midst of the camp the brazen serpent. There it stood aloft in the sight of all. The rays of the morning sun caught it and elicited in the ear of the multitude sweeter music than that which came from the statue of Memnon. It was the cynosure of all eyes. It was a promise of hope and life. The wounded looked, and by looking lived.

But it was the Israelites alone that could gaze upon that strange device. Thousands far distant over the world could not look and see it. It had "a local habitation." It was visible only within a limited circle. Distance hid it, and beyond the sweep of the natural eye it had no magic power.

But there is another disease—sin. It has invaded the world. It is the bite and the poison of the old serpent. It rages fearfully, and its results are awfully disastrous. "It carries men away as with a flood." For its cure, One—the man Christ Jesus, has been lifted up on the cross, and as the eye of the dying Israelite, amid the gathering of death's shadows, strained to catch the sight of the brazen serpent, so the eye of the dying sinner looks to Jesus. But it is not the prerogative of the Israelite alone to look. The Saviour lifted up was no monopoly of the Jews. They could not build palisadoes around the cross to exclude all others. There was no inner court for them, and an outer court for the Gentiles. His declaration

is, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw, not the Jews only, but all men."

*If* I be lifted. It was mentioned as a contingency then. It is a reality now.

Christ has been lifted up, and for eighteen centuries He has been drawing all men, men of all ranks and all lands unto Himself. It is not merely Christ, you will observe, that is to draw men;—not Christ with His heart of love and look of pity;—not Christ in all the excellence of His character, not the wonder of His miracles, and the completeness of His daily works. It is Christ lifted up—Christ agonizing—bleeding, dying on Calvary. It was Christ on the cross that stayed nature in her course, that caused her to clothe herself in darkness, that made the rocks rend and the earth quake. Christ controlled nature always as her Lord, but it was not till He hung upon the cross that nature came to weep in sympathy with Him, and send forth her cry of agony in response to His own. As it was Christ lifted up that caused such manifestations then in nature, so it is Christ lifted up that has exerted such wondrous influence since. "I will draw all men unto me."

There is in Christ on the cross the attractive power of *strangeness*—what we may call novelty. There is power to attract in what is new, out of the common course of events. A new thought has power when it first steals out of darkness, and stands visibly

before the mind. There is power in a new presentation of truth, in its gushings up from its hidden fountain—power in a new face, a new voice and manner. The Athenians spent their time in hearing and seeing something new. And the world has ever run after novelties. Now in Christ lifted up, there is strangeness. Men had been crucified before, and have been since. The strangeness is not in the crucifixion, but in the person crucified. It was strange to see such an one in such a place. Who was the meek sufferer there? It was the Son of God. It was the Prince of Life. It was the Eternal Word that had been with God and was God. It was One “by whom all things had been made;” One who “thought it no robbery to be equal with God;” who yet emptied Himself, “took on Himself the form of a servant,” and humbled Himself, becoming “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” It was a man only whom the Jew saw there. It is the Son of God as the Scriptures reveal Him. It was the outcasts of the race whom men had been accustomed to crucify. All their associations as connected with the cross were of the vile. And lo! here is one who stoops from the height of heaven, one who is called the fellow of the Father, lifted up on the cross. It would have been strange for a worthy man to be there, and yet the Son of God is there! Surely here is a strange thing, a thing to happen once for an eternity, a thing apart

and alone, remote from all events that *could* be linked with it, isolated from all associates, the one thing that draws heaven and earth to itself, standing out in the history of the universe in wondrous grandeur. There is in it all the attraction of a strange thing. We cannot become accustomed to it. When we pause, when the full, overpowering grandeur of the event comes upon us—Heaven's King crucified—we half sceptically inquire, can it have been? The language in which the event is set forth may seem old, but the thing itself must ever seem new and strange, and its strangeness will not depart as we contemplate it from the summits of a future glory.

There is in Christ on the cross the attractive power of *self-denial* and *self-sacrifice*. These are always interesting. We are attracted by them even if they do not win us to their imitation. It is these that constitute the most precious legacies of the past;—these that form the most marked pages of its history. We cannot read of self-sacrifice and self-denial without admiration. The men that have practised them, are the men whose memories the world will not let die. Others may have been greater than these; they may have filled a nation's eye, and bowed millions in homage, but if they have lived for self, worked for self, suffered for self, regardless of others, then others, however much they may have been astonished at their deeds, will not permanently respect them. It is those

who have denied self, that have won the lasting respect of men ; that have redeemed history ; that have made the past attractive to the good ; that have elevated and ennobled the race. In times of difficulty and danger when the hearts of men fail them for fear, it is these that draw the hearts of men to themselves. The safe and wholesome instincts of the people draw them. Select the man who has sacrificed most for his country's welfare, who in her greatest exigency has given up kindred, home, ease, wealth, life, all, to save her from dishonor or enslavement ;—select one who has given his life for those he loves, and to him the thoughts of many hearts go in admiration and sweet affection. Select one—and many even in our own day might be found—who has left his native land, and on some mission of love has expatriated himself, and consecrated himself to a life of toil and sacrifice among brutal men to draw them to Christ, and you have the man who has power over his fellows.

Thus there is an attractive power in self-sacrifice and self-denial wherever they are seen. And if they prove alluring when seen in their lower forms, shall they fail to be so when witnessed in their highest manifestations ? Shall other men win us to their study ? Shall we dwell admiringly around the scene where a Spartan band fell at Thermopylæ, and shall we not linger wonderingly around the cross ? Who has sacrificed so much as Jesus ? Who was raised so


high, and who descended so low? Who has put such a veil over his glory, who has laid aside such a power, who has left such a seat and such a crown? Who but He could have denied Himself and sacrificed so much? And it is not till the abnegation of self shall have ceased to draw men to contemplate it, that Jesus lifted up shall cease to draw men unto Himself.

There is in J  sus on the cross the attractive power of *compassion* and *mercy*. Self-denial and self-sacrifice may come from the judgment and the conscience. Men whose hearts are stiffened by a stern will like the cordage of ships at the approaching tempest, to endure life's storms and conflicts, may exercise them; and yet these men all unused to the melting mood, men living as it were far above the mass of us, glittering brightly but coldly on the highest peaks of our humanity, may not win our sympathies, however much they may our respect and reverence.

Self-denial and self-sacrifice are attractive always, even when a rigid sense of duty has begotten them, when unaccompanied by the graces of compassion and sweet pity, and all kind and gentle thoughts and emotions: but let them come to us not simply environed and borne on by a strong will and an unwavering conscience, but by a heart soft and gentle as the heart of woman—a man's self-sacrifice and self-denial set in a woman's gentleness and mercy—and then they win all our nature. They make breach upon

breach in the barriers of coldness and worldliness that surround us, and like billows they go over us.

Now when we look at Jesus on the cross, we see none of the strong bracing of the heart and will which prompted the indomitable Roman to thrust his hand into burning flames to convince the tyrant of the impotency of his tortures upon such an one ;—nor of the other Roman, Brutus, when, quenching all the father in his heart, he sat, the judge alone, and condemned to death the sons that broke his country's law ;—none of these, and that there were none of these, constitutes much of the attractiveness of the Saviour there. There was the stern voice of duty indeed summoning Him to Calvary ; there was a girding up of the man to meet the agonies ; but oh ! the heart of compassion in all its melting tenderness was there too. He might have been scarcely above man had the sterner elements of His nature alone been active : but when I see the heart of Jesus kept soft and tender there, seeking sympathy there, lifting itself mournfully and wailingly to a Father whose face was hid from Him, a heart full of filial tenderness, and that, forgetting self, was solicitous to provide for a loving and stricken mother ; a heart that could pray Heaven for forgiveness for His executioners ;—when I see this, I cry with Rousseau, “ If Socrates died like a philosopher, Jesus died like a God.” The gentleness and compassion of Jesus draw if possible even more than His self-sacrifice.



In Jesus on the cross there is the attractive power of *hope*:—hope of pardon, hope of help, hope of victory, hope of heaven, all the hope that man needs. Other men may regard Jesus crucified as they will, they may look at the cross as the crowning glory of a wondrous life, look on it as a blessed martyrdom, and look upon Jesus there as teaching us how to die, as He had before taught us how to live. We accept all this, but this view alone fills not out the comprehensiveness of our faith. Our faith expects to take in a higher view than them all. Jesus lifted up, lays the basis of our hope which sin had depressed seemingly forever. When we begin to hope for all that we need as sinners, we come to Jesus on the cross.

In obedience to the cruel taunt, "If thou be the Christ, come down from the cross,"—let us see Him come, and the darkness that draped the heavens at that hour, would have been typical of that still deeper darkness that would have settled on our prospects forever. They may cry, "Come down," but methinks the myriads of redeemed souls that would have been lost had He done so, rose before Him and cried, No. A universe paused, silence reigned in heaven, no music was in the spheres, every harp was stilled, every voice hushed; but amid all the sympathy that was felt by all the holy, not one would have bidden Him descend. Then, at that hour was the judgment, or as it might be rendered, the crisis of this world.



Despair and hope were in the balance. The scales trembled for a moment. Jesus cried, "It is finished," and henceforth hope was victor.

Jesus lifted up is the hope of a dying world. No hope is garnered elsewhere. If our faces are not today toward the blackness of darkness,—if a fearful and eternal journey into it is not appointed to us all, it is because Jesus was lifted up. Let others be timid if they will, let them nicely select and weigh their words, lest they should magnify the glories of Christ crucified too much. We shall most surely accord with the Scriptures when we give the largest scope to our thoughts, and the amplest fullness to our words in setting forth these glories.

Jesus in the manger, in the temple, by the grave of Lazarus, in all His beautiful teachings and His mighty works allures us:—but when we feel the power of our sins, when we look bodingly to death and its darkness, and to judgment and its terrors, it is Jesus on the cross that attracts us. It is the cross that concentrates within itself all the elements of power that can draw a ruined race.

## XXVII.

### THE DEFENDERS OF THE CHRISTIAN MORE THAN HIS ASSAILANTS.

*Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be  
with them.*—2 KINGS, vi. 16.

THE presence and power of a good man for national defence, is strongly illustrated in the case of Elisha. Inheriting the spirit of his stern old Master, like him he was a bulwark of his native land. When the king of Syria warred on a certain occasion, as he was wont, with Israel, and took deep and subtle counsels to come upon her unawares, and surprise and overthrow her armies, he found himself foiled in his attempts by the evident communication of his designs to his opponents, and their consequent preparation to meet him. Suspecting treachery in his own cabinet, he challenges the traitor to reveal himself, as though his mere challenge would draw the secret from his bosom. One of his councillors who knew more of Israel and her notable men than the rest, interposes *his* explanation of the methods by which the enemy became possessed of their cabinet secrets. There was

a man in Israel of keen vision and sharp hearing. He had an odd and mysterious way of seeing and knowing all that was whispered even in the king's bed-chamber. Some bird, some courser of the air bore it to him, and thus what was done in the most secret places in the metropolis of Syria was revealed at once and afar off in Israel. This dangerous man must be found and silenced. His retreat is discovered. Despotism always has its own coarse instruments, craft or force, to accomplish its designs. Chariots and horsemen—a host—are sent to Dothan. They choose the night, as if that keen eye that stole the secrets of the council-chamber could not also see the movements of armies amid the densest shades. They reach and encompass the city. The youthful servant of the Prophet rises early in the morning and goes forth; seeing the dread array, he hurries back trembling to his master to announce to him its presence. The intelligence ruffles not the heart,—stirs not a muscle of that calm and serene man. He is in communication with the fountain of all true repose. There were many to attack, but more for defence. He wishes to convey somewhat of his own composure to his servant. He tells him to “Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”

But not to leave it all to his simple word, he prays that his eyes may be opened that he may see; and

behold ! the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Horses and chariots encompassed the city to attack—horses and chariots more numerous filled the upper air to defend. The opening of the young man's eyes did not bring them there—did not create them. They were there before—invisible. Now they are visible. The methods, the machinery, so to speak, by which these unseen defenders manifested themselves to him had possibly peculiar adaptations to his case, for allaying his fears, but the defenders were really there. He was not deceived. These were not figments of his own fancy. The real, spiritual guardians were there encompassing the Prophet, equipped, ready to ward off danger. If it were a vision, it was a vision representing a reality. The record has no meaning, the vision was a mere deception, unless it was true that their protectors were actually more than their assailants.

This historical event has interest for us as a simple bald fact. It is delightful to know that one man in trying times had such a company to be with and guard him ; but this, like most events of the Scriptures, has its chief interest for us in the fact that it is illustrative of a general principle. As an isolated case, we might read it, but regarded as a precedent, as something which is true of others, of us, as well as of the old Prophet, it will be read with new and increasing delight.

*We* too are weak, *we* are subject to attack, *we* are in peril. Are these defenders for us, do they encompass us in thick phalanx, or are we to make our way in life, through its perils and difficulties, apart and alone? Are they that are with *us*, more than they that are with our foes? As a record of the olden time, as a part of the inspired word, this passage of Scripture has its chief significance for us, that we, under the appropriate conditions,—with enemies to meet, with passions to subdue, with souls stained by sin to purify, with heaven and immortal glory to win,—can adopt the same language, and say, “They that are with us are more than they that are with them.”

Who may truthfully and properly assert this? Those who now have in a degree the spirit of Elisha—those who have passed over from a position of hostility or indifference to God, to one of friendship with Him, who are now by simple faith in Jesus adopted into His family. If we now are on the right side in the great moral conflict which is going on here,—if our thoughts, our feelings, our sympathies run in right channels; and if our efforts follow our feelings, and we are striving in our positions, conspicuous, or obscure, with our faculties and means of influence, great or small; if in the shop, on the farm, in the counting-room, in the pulpit, in domestic retirement, we are striving to bring the world into allegiance to God and His Son; then may we take up the language of

the Prophet and say, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." We may break over all wide and narrow limits of sect, and standing on the broad platform of a common Christianity, we may inclose in our cincture of a glorious fellowship all that love Christ; and they and we together, in view of common foes and conflicts and interests, may say in company, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them."

Who are the more that are with us? God is with us. Christ is with us. The Holy Spirit is with us. It would be enough if these alone were with us to encompass our path, to serve as our Sun and our Shield. We can go nowhere where they will not encircle us, where the palisadoes of their strength will not rise about us. But these, all-sufficient as they are, constitute after all a unit—a sublime, awful, blessed *one*, but one still. These alone do not constitute *the more* that are with us. With them is the more in point of all-pervading and all-protecting power: but the language seems to imply that more in number are with us. And to have these, we must descend to subordinate beings, the allegiant, loving subjects of God.

*These all* are with us, and they are vastly more numerous than the disloyal. They are all *with* us and *for* us—angel and archangel—cherubim and seraphim—the allegiant in heaven and the allegiant

of earth. It gives us a striking view of the almost crowded fullness of the spiritual world, when we remember that it could spare such a host for the protection of Elisha alone. All that loyal host is with us when we are with them: with us, not to do our work, not to fight our battles, not to step in and smooth over all the rough places of our pilgrimage, not to render the attainment of heaven so easy as to make us feel that we have but to *glide* into it. No, they are not with us to lighten all our burdens, but with us to do for us what we need, with us to make us drastic and noble men, fit associates for themselves in future exploits and in their eternal career. When one goes out of his own cribbed and cabined personality, his little, lowly self, and identifies himself with the great interests of the universe, the great brotherhood of the good; in breaking away from his selfish love he gains the love of all. The universe flows into him when *he* joins *it*. The universal brotherhood come to him when he goes out to them. He gives his poor heart, and he gets in exchange their richly endowed hearts. He gives little and gains much. He casts in a single seed, and he reaps a rich harvest. He becomes united to the great family of God in Heaven and on the earth,—a family where each, even the weakest, is dear to all;—a family none too large for the holy sympathies to circle round and flow through. All are with each, and that too, in the measure that

each is with all. The language of that family is, "All mine is thine, and all thine is mine." Let God be our Father, and He and all His children, wherever they are, are with us. "More are they that be with us than they that be with them."

The reasons why so many are with us if we are loyal here upon the earth in our insignificance and sinfulness, are doubtless many. In a well-ordered family or kingdom, all must be with each. Its largeness does not check the flow of kindly feeling and interest, but gives them freer scope by giving them more objects to embrace. But there are *special* reasons why so many of the allegiant subjects of God should be with *us* here upon the earth.

Piety here is in its infancy. We would enter upon no field of conjecture here. We would not assert that this is *the* theatre where spirits are born and nurtured to fill up the ranks of the heavenly host, rent and decimated by the first great rebellion. We need no such conjecture. But that this is a great nursery of piety, none can doubt. Souls are here born *again*, born into the kingdom of God, out of the kingdom of Satan;—enter into an experience of good, *often* an experience of evil. They are born into the Divine kingdom, often, amid throes and agonies. Piety here is born like children on the ocean, amid storms and tempests. It heaves its first breath amid the sighing of the billows. It needs like all infancy



peculiar guardianship and nurture. It needs to be watched and cared for, lest its feeble life should flicker and go out. And it is. The elder and stronger spirits of the universe come to rock the cradle of our infancy—to support us while we are weak, and nurture us into a stronger life.

In a loving and true family, the birth of a child is a signal for general joy. It finds warm and loving hearts to welcome it when it first lands upon this bleak, cold world. It draws out new affections, gives a consciousness to many of new spiritual wealth. The little one almost stops the currents of business, lifts the domestic thoughts out of old ruts, draws as to a common centre all the kindly regards of the household; *it* is the one object of thought and interest, till it gets a little used to its new home and life. And in the higher family of God, when one is born into it, especially out of earth and out of sin, shall there not be a similar rush of thought and sympathy, a similar preparation of feeling for its reception in its new home? Shall it not summon those who have learned to walk in the ways of the Lord, to teach it to tread the same path? The law of analogy prepares us for the reception and belief of those passages of Scripture which speak of the interest of other and older citizens of the commonwealth of Israel in the entrance of a new and infant member within its domain. If his change of moral position brings enemies,

so does it friends, and the veriest infant in the family of God may say, "More are they that be with me than they that be with them."

But not only is piety in its infancy here, it is peculiarly subject to attack, and peculiarly needs defence. All life in this world has to keep up a wavering and often doubtful battle with death, and all but spiritual life is at length worsted in the conflict. This would yield also, but for the perpetual strengthening and protection which it receives from the stronger spiritual life of the more mature and experienced. Every Christian is a citizen of the kingdom of God. The person of a citizen is ever sacred. He lives and moves every hour encompassed by all the majesty and power of the state. His country's laws guard him—its armies keep sentry over him. Let the humblest citizen of a government be attacked, and at once he becomes the centre of its thoughts. There flow to him hearts that never before knew him. All the state's power, its fleets, its armies are enlisted to defend him, for he becomes the representative of its dignity. So is it in the Divine government. It defends its citizens at any cost. The weakest may command all its powers of defence: he becomes the representative of *its* dignity.

And where the subjects of the Divine government are most exposed and most need defence, there will be detached its most numerous and its strongest defend-

ers. Earth is such a place. The friends of God *are* here most exposed, and where most are wanted, there most come. It is because so many are *against* us here if we be good, that so many come to be *with* us in *actual presence*, as well as sympathy. God acts on the principle of economy, and gives earth so many defenders because it is such an exposed outpost in His dominions. "More are they that be with us than they that be with them."

I have already said that the spiritual guardians were round about Elisha and his servant, before the eyes of the latter were opened to see them. He simply became cognizant of them through the quickening of his vision. The *fact* that they were there, was his *safety*;—the *sight* of them was his *comfort*, and dissipated his fears. And so the fact that so many are with and for us, if we are on the side of Christ, is our safety. They are about us, though we realize it not. When told so, we sometimes wish that we could have our eyes anointed, that we could see them, that they might stand out in visible and tangible array before us as they did before him. We long for sight here often as elsewhere. But to sigh for a sight of all our spiritual guardians, is to forget the very object of the Gospel. It comes to *re-create* and strengthen our faith in things and persons unseen and eternal; it comes to re-bridge the great gulf which *we* have fixed between the seen and temporal, and the unseen and eternal,

and to draw us in thought and affection over the bridged chasm. It comes to make real and substantial to us the invisible; but to make the invisible visible, would be to subvert the very design of the Gospel. *It* seeks to make us walk by faith, not by sight,—to live for, fight for, work and suffer and die for invisible interests and beings; and to reveal them (if that were possible) would be to subvert its objects. Our invisible helpers must remain invisible. They are here. They are real. We need but a spiritual vision, an all-conquering faith to see them, to realize their presence, to banish our fears, to make us ever calm and serene. The telescope plants no new stars in the upper firmament. It only rolls away the darkness and makes them stand confessed. So faith creates nothing, brings from the sweet heavens no new guardians; but it does reveal those that are here, it does banish our fears by showing us through what environing hosts of friends we may walk in our spiritual novitiate, and reach their and our home. Faith says in all the way, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

The good, whether they be feebly good or strongly good, whether their hearts be fixed with an iron rigidity in goodness, or whether they tremble toward it like the jostled needle seeking its centre of rest,—are yet with the more numerous party. And in seeking to advance our holy religion, to bring men

alienated or indifferent more heartily to embrace it, we want the influence of this simple fact.

Every great and far-reaching interest *must* have its lower as well as its higher order of motives and impulses. Man is a many-sided being. He has his higher and lower principles of action, his higher and lower affections and tendencies. And a cause which should have only one or two great towering incitements rising like lofty mountains above the level of common life, and should be ever ringing its monotonous changes on these, would fail to reach the *mass* of men. Some lofty natures might feel and yield to their power; many might feel them in their better moods; but they would not reach all men in all moods. Now our religion is a great, a universal interest. It is for men—all men—in all positions—in all stages of intellectual enlargement and social refinement. It proposes to subdue men to itself, to raise them to the loftiest heights of spiritual power. To reach men and raise men, it must come down to them. It must stoop to conquer. If it would find them and save them, it must seek them on the low levels which they occupy. And this religion is so rich in resources, so crowded with motives, meets men at so many points, knocks and is willing to enter at so many doors, that it rarely finds one sunk so low that it cannot discern something within the broad circuit of its appeals that will reach and engage him. And it is

proper to appeal to all the *innocent* tendencies of man's nature,—to slip in at a lower portal if you find the higher closed.

Now there is with all men a desire to be with the more numerous party. We are gregarious, and we like to join the biggest flock. Let it be justly anticipated, that in a given political canvass, a certain party is to win the day, and that simple anticipation will alone affect enough and swing them over to secure its triumph. None like to be alone, and few like to be in a small and waning minority. There is no sin in wishing to be with the multitude, if it be not to do evil with them. It is natural to love to go with the majority. Let a stranger be selecting his place of worship, and if conscience do not dictate otherwise, he will join the largest congregation, and that not wholly from interested motives. He is yielding to a dictate of his nature. Now in joining the Lord's side, in deserting the party of sin and Satan, and coming over upon the side of God and His dear Son, we are deserting a small and waning minority, and are uniting ourselves with the large and ever-swelling majority. "More are they that be with us than they that be with them." In leaving sin and entering the service of Christ, we are not condemning ourselves to isolation and loneliness. We are not allying ourselves with a few sad and lonely beings who will afford us no genial and sunny companion-

ship; we are not leaving scenes where ranks are thick, the voices many, and entering scenes where all is desert and solitary, where the owl whoops, and the satyr dances, and the bittern stalks. No! we are coming over where the ranks are more serried, where the voices are more glad and numerous. The good are in the majority. Their party is in the ascendant. They have the gladness, the companionship, the joy, the ecstasy on their side. They may say, "come with us and we will not only do you good, but we will give you the best society, and the most of it."

And if we are Christ's and for Him, then the "more" are with us just where we want them most;—not here possibly, where we are strangers and pilgrims, not in this world, which is but a caravansary, a tent which we pitch in our night of time, and strike in the morning;—but in our home, across the river, amid the unseen and eternal:—*there* the majority are on the side of the Lord, and effectively with all that are with the Master. "Fear not then, for more are they that be with us than they that be with them."

If fear is to have any influence in religious concerns, (and who will deny that it has?)—if our fears are to be appealed to and stirred, then so much as it should affect our position, it should legitimately influence us to take sides with Christ. Sometimes, when

the stern dictates of conscience summon us to leave the service of sin, we tremble to abandon the associates of our youth or manhood : our fears, our false shame keep us in the old haunts, the old habits, and with the old associates. But *if* fear is to affect and decide our moral position, it should impel us to take the right side. In a universe governed by a benevolent and omnipotent Being, fear, if it acts under a wide view of things, will act to make us take His side, join with His friends, for *He* is the strongest,—*they* the most numerous.

This day, all over the world, every soul, however weak, however unknown and despised, however it may struggle with sin, may yet with an eye of faith pierce the enveloping gloom, pass out of the immediate loneliness and say, "More are they that be with me than they that be with them." The wicked may be in lofty and rich dwellings, may be surrounded by the multitude, the objects of admiration, pointed at in the streets, waited on at home, the observed of all observers ; and yet that pious soul, all shut out from the halls of the great may say, "the *more* and the *better* are with me." True piety can never be alone.

I have said that every pious soul, however humble, is with the majority, and the majority with *it*. We need the influence of this truth in all the walks and scenes of our religious life. Debarred as we *may* be



from religious society—cut off as we *must* be on the higher planes of the religious life from much sympathy, we have need to take the consolations of our theme, and press them close to our hearts. Lofty as may be our spiritual aspirations, scale as towering heights as we may in the Divine life, far out of reach of the many who yet are upon the earth, we may still feel that we are not alone; the *more* even on these heights are still with us.

But preëminently, we need the consolations of our theme when we make it our life-task to persuade others to join “the sacramental host of God’s elect.” You, my Brother, will need them. You will go out from these scenes of blessed spiritual companionship. You know not where your lot in future life may be cast, know not how isolated from the great centres of the cross, of religion upon the earth, you may be—how few will gather around you to stimulate you and hold up your hands and encourage your heart. It would be strange if you did not sometimes feel that you were left to bear up the ark of God alone; as if you were bereft of all associates and helpers. But, Brother, in the darkest and most solitary hours, up among the mountains, in the valleys, wherever you are, remember that if you are *with God*, and making aggressions into the enemy’s territory, seeking to enlist new soldiers for the Great Captain, *you are not alone*. Be

you where you may, cut off as much as possible from the society of the good of earth ;—yet even then, they that sympathize with you, sending loving and helping thoughts after you, are more than they that be against you.

## XXVIII.

### GOD OUR HELPER.

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.*—PSALM cxxi. 1, 2.

I SHALL use this passage as the basis of some remarks upon the help we may obtain of God in working out our destiny.

God has made us. He has placed us here in just such a world as we find. He has surrounded us with just such influences as encompass us. He has told us what to do—has marked out a path to walk in—an end to reach—a destiny to accomplish. The work assigned us is not easy; it is difficult,—but not too difficult. In it all, God has promised us help, and this is what we need. He does not propose to do all for us,—to take us up, and carry us on to our goal and our destiny, in a mere state of mental and bodily passivity. That were unworthy of us and of Him; that were to subvert the very purpose of our creation. No intelligent, free agent can be thus dealt with. God has given us thought, volition, general capacities, to

be used in working out our destiny, and if the work of life ever seems too arduous, if the way marked out either in its parts or as a whole seems too difficult, He stands pledged to afford us help. He neither designs that we should reach the true end of our existence in a state of passivity, as mere motionless creatures, nor on the other hand does He design that we should reach it apart from and independent of Him. We must work, but work in God, encompassed by Him, leaning on Him, looking up to Him, feeling in the depths of our soul that without Him we can do nothing, and that with Him we can do all things. We must keep up all through life the proper balance between our freedom and dependence. We must feel that our freedom is a sound—a name,—that it can be freedom only as it acts in God, is borne on and up by His omnipresence and omnipotence. We must stir up the energies that God has made to act efficiently only in Himself, we must work and struggle, but with the feeling that all will be to no purpose unless God help us. Help—that is what we need, and what God will give.

This help will be *such and just such as we need here and now*, with our weakness and in our conditions, with our duties and our conflicts. We are not angels, we have not their powers, we are not in their spheres, we have not their duties or work. We are men. We have men's powers and duties and conflicts

and works. We are not in heaven, but on the earth, in the flesh, subject to its infirmities and dangers. God knoweth our frame, our position, just what and where we are, and what we have to do, and He proposes to help *us*, just as we are and where we are, with our work and our conflicts. This aid comes clear down to us and to our condition, flows into our weaknesses, adapts itself to our nature and circumstances. We may be very weak—our sins may have sunk us very low; but we cannot have sunk so low that we cannot cast our eye up to the hills whence cometh our help. It is help for poor creatures like us, who are blind and weak, whose vision has been obscured, and whose powers have been enfeebled by sin, that we need, and it is such help that God will give. When it is proposed to grant help, in order to be effectual it must be help reaching clear down to the state and condition of those to whom it is proffered. It would be a mockery to proffer the help that angels need to us. They need help, for they work out their destiny in reliance upon Divine aid, but they do not need the same that we do.

The help that God proffers is *sufficient* help. "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." He made the earth with all that it contains. The globe with its occupants swings in its orbit sustained by Him. He made the heavens—those galaxies of stars and suns, visible and invisible. Thus the

Psalmist would base an argument for the sufficiency of Divine help upon what God has done. "He has made and upholds such mighty orbs, and surely *I* may rely upon Him. He made them, and He can help *me*." He seems to love to magnify the works of God, because by any addition which he makes to their greatness, he increases his ideas of the greatness of the Being to whom he looks up for help. He does not as some do, look out upon the earth, measure the mountains in his scales, and scan the ocean's depths; and then leaving earth, and soaring into the heavens, trace the paths of the stars as they sweep in their circuits, ply the telescope, and out of the depths of space evoke new luminaries that had otherwise refused to come, and wandering far and wide in a boundless universe at length reach the awful conclusion, that he is too small a creature to be noticed by the Being who made all this. His science (ill-starred) does not wander so far and wide to bring him back the message of despair. He does not wish to spy out a grand universe, to be left a waif and an estray in it. He does not desire to magnify God's works only to be cast off as too insignificant to be thought of by God. He would rather that God should not have made quite so many worlds, if his cares became so numerous that no thoughts or affections were disengaged for him. The greatness of God's works does not destroy in his estimation the fatherhood of

God. Oh, no! It was left for modern wise men to lose a sense of God's care and aid amid the greatness of His works,—to infer from the fact that God made the earth and the heavens, that He could not and would not stoop to aid them. The Psalmist, and all who have his spirit, draw a different inference;—He made the heavens and the earth, and He can and will help me,—this is the blessed conclusion.

The moment I make the greatness of God's works a reason to my own soul for my being overlooked and unhelped amid the mighty sum of things, that moment this greatness only becomes a burden, yea, a horror to me. I dread it. It is like piling mountains on me to crush me. I will never stand and look up, if the sight leaves me without one to care for and help me. But when I discard such a godless science, and seek out God's works, and dwell upon their greatness only to enhance the greatness of *my* Father and *my* Helper, then the universe becomes to me, not an awful desolation, but a temple echoing the praises of a loving God and Father. The Psalmist dwelt upon God's greatness only to look more confidently to Him for help. My Helper made the heavens, therefore His help will be all-sufficient. Science thus prosecuted, brings joy to the soul, not a feeling of loneliness and orphanage.

The help that God gives is *opportune, timely*. "God shall help us and that right early." Help be-

hind the time, when the battle is over and either lost or won, when the pressure is gone or has crushed us, is hardly help at all. It may be only an aggravation to proffer it then. We want help at the exigency when we peradventure fail without it. Help from man does not often come at the right time. There is a great deal of help for poor crushed souls even here in this world,—the difficulty is that it does not come soon enough. But Divine help is opportune help, it comes not before nor after, but just when it is needed.

You will of course understand that Divine help does not come in the way, nor do the things that human help does. There is a child in yonder dwelling—the only child of its parents. It is bright and beautiful, the crowning gift of God to them, the ornament of their wealth, the gladness of their home. It was precious at the first, and every hour it has wound its silent way into deeper depths of the soul. It falls sick on a day, and its voice is stilled, and its smile gone. Anxious fears begin to be awakened there. Friends—physicians are called. Skill plies its remedies, but without avail. Strength decays, disease does its work, the little pulse ceases to beat, the child is borne to its silent home. Human helpers would have saved that child to its parents. But God, who made the heavens, looked down; He heard the child's moan, the mother's sighs and prayers. He saw and heard all and sympathized in all. He is also a Helper.



Why did he not help as good men would have helped ? Because His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways, and therefore His help is not our help. Were it not for scenes such as these, the very consciousness of our need of Divine help would fade out of the minds of men. It is amid such darkness and desolation that our need of help from God is felt most keenly, and our cry for it goes up most strongly. God keeps Himself in the souls of the race very much through the sorrows of the race. Our sorrows are inlets through which Divine help is sought and comes. In the best way and time it comes. God does help those who desire it "right early," after His thought—not after theirs.

God's help is *constant*, not fitful, evanescent, here now and anon gone. Men are impulsive, changeable, and are therefore unreliable. They often purpose better than they do. They cannot depend on themselves. Their intentions may be good, but their performances turn out small. This is so with the best men. They mean to help, but they are not masters either of their moods or their means. But God is unchangeable. He knows, and we may know what He will be. He will be as He is. He is unchangeable, because He is unimprovable, and the help He gives to-day He can give to-morrow if our condition requires the same. He is not constrained to consider His means of helping. That is an element which

may always be left out. He only considers our need, and His help comes as constantly as the light of the sun by day. He is never removed from us nor we from Him. We cannot pass out of God,—beyond the sphere of His omniscience and omnipotence, and therefore can never pass the limits where His help may not swifter than thought reach us. When stricken with pain, when overwhelmed with grief, when our life is going out in agony, when we have passed clear beyond the region where human help avails; God may be helping us. Help from God is not intermittent—it comes not in jets—it is not dependent on outward circumstances, nor upon personal health—it is not a varying quantity, but an unvarying one. We may go forth to duty, to toil and struggle, we may go up into our chambers and lie down upon our sick and dying beds, we may go out upon the untried scenes of eternity, relying upon it as surely as we may rely on the sun or the tides. That help, when we have sought it in the proper way, and with the proper spirit, will no more be wanting to us than the earth will fail us to tread upon—nay, it will be operative when all material things shall have passed away.

This help of God when it comes, *does not weaken our proper self-reliance*, nor our general powers of thought and will. It rather increases the force of all our faculties. It strengthens us. It does not

dwarf—it brings out into the highest possible activity our whole natures. He is a wise, a very wise man who knows when and how to give help so that it shall not weaken the proper self-reliance and force of character of the recipient. Human help, rightly administered, may make us stronger, may encourage, stimulate, press on to duty or suffering. This is the proper office of help, to make us more noble and forcible creatures, but this is not always, perhaps not generally the actual result. A large part of the help which men give, encourages slothfulness, leads to inaction, to a spirit of unmanly dependence, develops weakness, not force and energy of character. Much help is misdirected and misapplied—leads to evil, not to good. But God's help is so directed and applied, comes at such a time and in such a way, that we are made more manly and noble by it, stronger and more alert and enterprising. It comes not to lift us as a dead weight even up to heaven; it enters as a silent current of magnetism to stimulate us, as a celestial breath to stir us to will and to do. It comes not so much to do for us, as to excite and aid *us* to do. While it is in us in greatest force, we are not attracted to it to observe it; it bears us on under the fullest activity of our powers to God and heaven. It never weakens, but always strengthens us. It develops in us all that is noble and strong, and even daring.

Having this effect, it may be received without any

loss of dignity or any *right* feelings of independence. Men often like to be above the need of human help, and they desire it in part, perhaps, because they are compelled to feel less manly, less free and noble when they receive it, or the burden of obligation is oppressive: but help even from men—men too, not related to us by blood, may come in such a way as to leave all our best feelings unembarrassed and free, and our manliness untarnished. It may so come and be so received as to make us feel more truly dignified and noble, by the new consciousness of human worth it brings with it, and the new gratitude it excites in our own souls. It is only the proud churl that will reject human help when it is needed and is proffered in the right spirit.

But help from God is our birthright, so to speak. We receive it with less loss of dignity and independence, if possible, than the child does who receives nourishment and care from its mother. We receive it with as little loss of true independence as the mariner receives the wind that fills his lifted sails, or the light of the stars and sun that guide him on his way. We live, move, and have our being in God, and to be independent of His help may be the wish of a demon, but never the proper aspiration of a man.

There is then help for us in God—help for us all—help for us who are so weak and so sinful and corrupt,—just such help in God through the great Medi-

ator Jesus as we need. There is not a poor burdened soul on the earth that may not have it through that new and living way which has been opened up in the Gospel.

But how can we obtain it even through Christ? In the same way that the Psalmist did. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Up yonder, on those heavenly hills, there, in God who made heaven and earth, is our help,—there and not elsewhere,—not here on the earth,—in man great or small,—not in riches or position;—no, but in God is our help. We must seek it there. Our eye, our heart must be sent up on a heavenly errand for it. Let us know where to look for it, let us seek it in prayer;—it will come.

"Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God."

## XXIX.

### MYSTERIES UNVEILED IN THE FUTURE.

*Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.—JOHN xiii. 7.*

CHRIST had just performed a menial service to His Apostles. He had washed their feet, and wiped them with the towel wherewith He had girded Himself. Coming to Peter, he is ready to question the propriety of such an act done by such a man. Peter regards it as incongruous with His character and position. Jesus waiving all direct reply to his objections, refers him to the future. He might not know the significance of this act now, but when he should come more into the meaning of Christ's mission—into the genius and spirit of His kingdom—when he should come to see that it was not one of pride and self-exaltation, but one of service and self-sacrifice;—then he would understand this act of his Master. It seemed a degrading, almost meaningless act *now*—then it would be crowded with import. Now, it seemed the act of a menial—then, when the

glory of that kingdom dawned upon him—when all human ideas of greatness were reversed, and when those that sank lowest, rose highest, it would seem the act that befitted such a man. It would be seen to be the purest religion, teaching by the noblest example.

The future is painted to us as the theatre whose light shall shine upon the now dark doings of Christ. And here we have a great truth, an all-comprehensive principle presented for our solace and comfort. We know not the ways, the doings of God now ; we shall know them hereafter. He will explain Himself in the time, or in the eternity to come.

There is in all of us who have ever been stirred with thought at all—whose minds have ever been started into action, a desire, an almost delirious desire to *know*. We feel stunted, cramped all around. The forest closes in—the darkness shuts down close to us. We want to escape—to get beyond, out into a broader space, where we can see farther and more. We beat with restless wing against the bars of our cage. We meet all about with mysteries which we cannot solve. The world where we dwell is full of them. This life which we can span so easily, presents them everywhere. We are full of questions which none can answer. And when we rise above earth and time, and pass into another sphere, and look out upon a broader stage, mysteries—greater, darker—crowd upon us still more thickly. Even that blessed book which lifts us

above time, and whereon as upon a Jacob's ladder we can mount up and look into the windows of eternity,—that book which reveals to us our immortality, and the way to make it blessed, even it, by the elevation to which it exalts us, by the wide reach of thought which it opens, only makes broader the field of mystery. Just as the telescope, by bringing unnumbered worlds that the naked eye never saw within the compass of our vision, *suggests* to our excited thought more than it *reveals*, the Bible suggests more questions than it answers. It is the great stirrer up of the world's mind. It falls into it like an impending cliff into a motionless sea. It makes us heirs of eternity, instead of time and earth. It raises us above the finite into the infinite. It introduces us consciously within the circle of God's thoughts and regards. We are embraced within the compass of His purposes and plans. We are not waifs and estrays here. We have not been waked up into a brief being to perish. We are not to be stranded on the shores of time—we are to sail the ocean of eternity. God feels for us. Jesus died and reigns for us. We are to be taken up, and embraced among the things of eternity. We are to act there. When time shall have died, and suns and stars shall have been unsphered, we are to live. This elevation which the Bible gives us, takes us up into the sphere of the eternal and divine. It fairly dwarfs the mysteries of earth, and makes those of eternity and God



loom up before us. We come now to grapple, to strive to encompass the things of God. We sway away at the great pillars of God's decrees. We put our puny arms around them, and strive to span them. We stand before the unrolling scroll of God's providences, and seek to decipher their meaning, and understand their tendencies. We strive to know God by what He does. We question the import of events as they pass before us. We struggle to know why God does as He does here and now. This wild turmoil of earth—this conflict of good and evil, and this bearing down often of good by the evil—these sufferings which cover the earth as with a pall—these early and sudden deaths—this long delay to answer prayer—this slow advance of the kingdom of God, if it advance at all—these crushing woes that come upon portions of our race—this apparent indifference of God to them all ; —we stand up before these dark mysteries of God and question them ; but they are dumb, "They answer not again." "God's ways are in the sea, and His paths in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known." Our hearts almost break for the longing they sometimes feel to solve these mysteries, but God gives no solution of them.

Some of these doings of God we cannot know now from absolute incapacity. We have not the powers to understand them. By no language, no signs, could God communicate the knowledge of them. It would

be like the child attempting to understand the differential calculus. While we are children, we must think and understand as children. It indicates our greatness that we can be awed by them—be curious and ask questions about them. The beasts find no mysteries, ask no questions. Mere stupidity asks none. It takes mind, wakeful mind to ask questions intelligently—to prize mysteries and stand thoughtfully in front of them, looking up toward their summits. But if this indicates our greatness, the fact that we can answer so few of these questions indicates our littleness. We are great and little at the same time.

But then, while there are many things about the doings of God which we have not capacities to appreciate even if He should reveal them, it is also not to be denied that there are other things which we could understand if they were revealed. The knowledge of them is withheld not arbitrarily—not because of our incapacity to know, but for reasons aside from these; perhaps to make us less fluent with our wherefores, to rebuke a vain curiosity or impertinence, perhaps to try our trust, and see if we will believe where we cannot know. It is evidently not the main thing with God to make us knowing beings in our present state. He has ends beyond and above that—ends possibly which would be defeated if we were allowed to know more. The gratification of our cognitive faculties might thwart His benevolent designs and

obstruct the progress of our hearts. We know more than we practise. Our intellects are better than our hearts. Our curiosity is greater than our faith. Our hearts must be brought up even with our heads—our faith with our knowledge. We may not know all that we could here, that we may trust, and our simple child-like trust may open up into a wider and clearer knowledge, while he that demands to know, and refuses to trust, may be doomed to perpetual ignorance.

But whatever may be the cause why we know not now; whether it be from incapacity, or for purposes of discipline, one thing is certain—"what we know not now, we shall know hereafter." There is a sphere where mysteries will be cleared up, questions answered. We shall know hereafter if we trust here. We are not doomed to perpetual ignorance. The desire to know the doings of God will not be ever balked. Light will dawn. Our horizon will widen.

Some of the dark things of God may be clear this side the dark screen. Even now, perhaps, some things that were once dark, are clear, and others are clearing up to us. Peter this side the grave passed into the meanings of Christ's menial service. He could not understand it while he and his fellow Apostles were contending who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; but when he and they came to know the true order of nobility therein—that he was

greatest who served most,—then he understood it. So we, as we grow in the knowledge of God, come more and more into the knowledge of His doings. We get round upon the illuminated side of them. We gaze at them from that side, even as an eagle in its aerial soarings looks down upon the silver lining of a cloud that seems all dark to us. There is a progressive relief to our minds. If the advance of thought brings new mysteries to view where we must trust alone, it certainly does relieve many of the old ones. We penetrate them. We solve them. They vanish forever. Many a child of God has bowed before the ways of God as dark, which in his advancing piety became all light to him. What he knew not, he knows.

Still other things await the light of eternity, of heaven. Its light even of itself will clear them. Light makes manifest. We shall stand on those heights and look back, and at once a thousand things now dark will be luminous. Reasons of the divine doings will stand out clearly. All the ways which God has led us will lie like a thread of silver light down the mountain sides up which the Divine hand has led us. We shall see that this dark calamity—that loss of fortune—these days of sickness and withdrawal from the busy activities of life, and confinement in our narrow chambers—the sudden and untimely death of that wife or husband, child, parent, friend—what that terrible

temptation and conflict continuing through months or years,—what all the dealings of God here below had to do with bringing us to our present position. We shall see that not one day of darkness, not the life of one friend, not one trial could have been spared us. We shall see that all that has happened to us, has been designed to stimulate or to encourage us ; to wean us from earth and to draw us to heaven. The light of heaven itself will probably show us that God hath led us by a right, and by the best possible way to a city of habitation.

The doings of God and their reasons may be the subject of revelation from Him directly, or through His agents. Angels may be commissioned to tell us, or the elder dwellers from our own world who have long bowed before the throne, and taking their golden urns to the fountain, have thence drawn light. Those who once knew our trials and our doubts, may take us and teach us the ways of God more perfectly. We shall all of us be little children when we arrive there—almost as ignorant as is the babe when it lands upon our earth, and these older dwellers may be our teachers.

Still other things will await the expansion of our minds in the progress of eternity. The mysteries of God will not be all cleared up on our first landing in Heaven : not those which are now the objects of thought to us. Some will be, but not all. It will

be true there as it is here, that what we know not, we shall know hereafter. Even angels, we are told, desire to look into and investigate the mysteries of redemption. There are things about it which they cannot teach us, for they do not know them. Our way there, as it should be here, will be on high. Mysteries will be darkening and clearing away—rising and setting in slow and steady procession forever. Earth is not the only world of mystery, and we are not the only order of beings who must bow before it. Wherever God is, there is and will be mystery. When we have traversed the longest arch of knowledge, we shall be constrained to say, “Lo, these are a part of Thy ways!” We shall be finding out, and still searching to find out forever: and yet it is true that these doings of God which lower so darkly in our path—which break upon us as the waves of a head-beat sea break upon the staggering ship, and almost stun us,—these will be cleared up.

I am inclined to the opinion that the dark doings in God’s Providence will all be solved before or at the Judgment of the great day. Up to that time neither the progress of the human soul, nor the light of heaven, nor the instruction of angels or of men made perfect, will make all the dark things light. That day will. It will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgments of God. It will be the termination of the mystery of God’s dealings with men. That day will put an end to mere trust with reference to

these things simply, though not with respect to other things. Then our knowledge will begin. We may not know *all* up to that time ; then God will stand revealed and acquitted at the bar of every intelligent soul in the universe.

We see in the light of our subject that the Gospel alone promises and makes sure knowledge to men. It has been charged with suppressing the spirit of inquiry, blinding the soul, demanding an easy and unsolicitous faith. It does, indeed, demand faith, but only in the sphere where faith legitimately operates. If there is an intense desire to know more than it reveals, it is because it has revealed so much ; it has created the mysteries which it promises to solve. If it does not gratify curiosity, it does not suppress or crush it. It tells the human soul to gather up its hard questions, to put them on file, and pledges the answer to the trusting spirit. It points to the illimitable future, and says, "It is all my own ; on that theatre I will meet you and solve all."

We see the wisdom of quietly waiting. The clouds will roll up and off from the dark doings of God. We stand and look up to them in dread amazement. We shudder as the wheels of Providence sweep by, and we see not the eyes that guide them. But they are there. Time is the night—Eternity is the day of God. Let us trust Him where we cannot know. We shall know if we will wait. We shall know when it will be best to know.

### XXX.

#### POSITION AND CHARACTER COINCIDENT IN THE DIVINE REALM.

*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth ; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.—2 TIM. ii. 20, 21.*

A SIMPLE fact, well known in our household experiences, is here referred to. In all our dwellings there are vessels, if not of gold and silver, yet of comparative preciousness ; and others, if not of wood and earth, yet of comparative worthlessness—some occupying positions of relative honor, and some of dishonor ; some that are kept for great occasions, others for common use. The intimation also is, that in our Heavenly Father's house it is the same. In it, as in our common dwellings, there are vessels of gold and silver, and those of wood and earth ; some for positions of honor, and some for dishonor. The law of fitness prevails in His house vastly more than in common dwellings. Precious vessels are used for



high purposes, and earthy ones for ignoble ones. Nothing is out of place.

Dropping the figure, the right men are put in the right places.

The diversity of position in God's realm, the law fixed and irreversible of elevated position, and the uses future and eternal of souls corresponding to qualification,—these are the topics suggested by the text.

And *first*—the diversity of position in God's realm—vessels of honor and dishonor. No house is equipped without both. God's universe has both. The order of the universe is monarchical, or if democratic, yet only so as each member springs or sinks spontaneously to his own position. God's creation is not, and never will be, smoothed into a monotonous evenness. Not a Western prairie, stretching out miles on a dead level, but a New England prospect from some lofty hill-top, is its analogue. There are heights and depths—mountain ranges and valleys—towering peaks, and corresponding depressions in the scenery of God's spiritual landscape—souls soaring as on eagle's wings, and souls sinking as with a leaden gravity. It is not for me, or for any of us so much to defend this order, as it certainly is not our province to murmur at it, but simply to accept it. God did not make his realm after our thought, but after His own, and we are not to go about to conjecture what might have been, but to see what is. And this is the con-

stitution of creation,—diversity of position exhibited here in this world ; exhibited possibly, yea, probably, still more in the other sphere into which this opens. It is sufficient simply to state this diversity so patent to all—lying upon the very surface of life—indicated so clearly in this and in all parts of the Scripture.

In the *second* place, the Law, fixed and irreversible of elevation, is indicated in our text. If a man purge himself from *these*, that is, from false doctrines, affections, practices, from all that is debasing, impure, unholy, he shall be a vessel unto honor. The law of elevation as here expressed, lies wholly in moral qualities—things that lie within the compass of our will. There is doubtless a law of position, of elevation, lying outside of our mere will, inhering in purely natural qualities, in things conferred on us at our birth, in the simple sovereignty of the Almighty. Some men have their position assigned them in their mere gifts. Great minds have great positions opened to them, great tasks imposed upon them. Little minds cannot do the work, perform the function, or spring to the places of large ones. One kind of gifts cannot fill the posts of another kind. Natural gifts point to their own places in this and in all worlds. Moral qualities do not make up always for natural deficiencies. A good heart will not make a profound mathematician, nor a great discoverer, nor a great poet, or statesman, or orator, or writer. God doubt-

less has positions in the next world, as He has in this, which none but the higher order of gifts can fill. And yet our text is in correspondence with the whole range of Scriptural teaching,—that true honor is dependent on moral qualities in the Divine kingdom.

“If a man purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor.” If *any* man purge himself, no matter who he is, no matter where he is born, in what age, in what country or rank in life, no matter with what natural endowments, great or small, with what opportunities, few or many; if he purge himself, he shall be a vessel of honor, shall be put to some high and honorable use in the Father’s house. So that the range of honor is limited in the Divine kingdom to the sphere of moral qualities. The pure ones shall be the gold and silver vessels there—all else are wood or earth. This is the irreversible Law of elevation—this will fix a man’s position.

In the kingdoms of this world men are born to honorable places, or they rise to them by mere gifts, or they creep to them in their own slime, or they worm their way to them by having no opinions or judiciously concealing them, by sycophancy, by adroitness, by tergiversations, by the arts of political legerdemain, by anything but honest opinions, and a free expression of them. But in the Divine kingdom, those only win its honors, its lofty positions, who are worthy of them. The pure man shall be a vessel of

honor. So that we see how it is that men must often abjure the high positions of this world to win the high stations of the next—be inconspicuous here that they may be conspicuous there—sink low here, that they may rise to a lofty height there. Whenever a denial or concealment of the loftier qualities is demanded for the furtherance of the man here, then he must decline promotion here that he may win it there. Not that a man is to put the honors of this world into the one scale, and those of the next into the other, and choose skilfully between them; not that he is to make it a mere question of profit and loss, looked at through the whole term of his being, and deferring present honors so small, select those so great; to barter one set of honors for another,—this is not holiness at all, it may be the broadest selfishness. This, the man bent on purifying himself will not do. The purity is what he aims at. The purity is its own all-sufficient reward. But seeking that for its own sake—having won it by the grace of God, he, as the result of it, will be a vessel of honor in the house of our God.

This puts the honors of eternity clear out of the reach of accident or chance, or mere blind sovereignty, which, with many, is the synonym of unreason, and brings them within the sphere of order, of cause and effect, where reason holds sway, where we may choose one object and know what will come of our choice. God wants pure men in His kingdom,

and, if I may go further, I would say, He wants men who have not been made pure simply by some Almighty stroke—like a sun-stroke—coming down upon them out of the heavens—made pure, if that were possible, without any agency of their own ; but He wants those who have purified themselves, not without but with the Divine help, men who have climbed up out of great depths into sublime heights, men who have been shipwrecked and then swam for their lives, and reached the shore, and clung to the crags with their very teeth, and have held on while the great waves have beaten in upon them, and through tenacious climbing and death-like struggle, have finally clambered up and got safely out of the floods. He wants these men for vessels of honor in his kingdom, and He tells us so, and incites us to do our best, to clear the chambers of imagery, to work away Hercules-like in the Augean stable of our natures, and purify ourselves, that so we may be vessels of honor. It is not if a man is purged by some foreign force, but if he purify himself, that he shall be a vessel of honor—a vessel plunged in the great fountain, and brought up brimming and dripping from its depths—*full* of honor. There will be some purged large vessels and some small ones, some Pauls and some of vastly inferior grades, but all vessels of honor, and all full. Striking a line through the intelligent creation, and putting its population on the one or the other side of

it, those who have purged themselves through Divine grace will be on the side of honor, not one of them on the side of dishonor; all in the resurrection trump will wake to honor, not one of them to shame and everlasting contempt.

But there is a *third* element in our text, and that is, the uses, future and eternal, which these purified souls, these vessels of honor, of gold and silver, will subserve. "If a man purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." A rational man neither makes nor purchases any vessels without a purpose. He does not go into the market and buy here and there at random, giving up all to caprice. He knows what he wants. He has his house furnished in his soul before he has it furnished in reality. If he has built it wisely, orderly, and well, he knows what will fill out his idea, and make his house seem the thing that he planned. He buys nothing for mere show, all for use, and perhaps the costliest things that he buys are for the use of beauty. So with our Divine Father, He has built His house, and He is furnishing it with the costliest furniture, the most polished, honorable vessels, living, sanctified souls. "He that purgeth himself, shall be a vessel of honor, meet for the master's use."

God means the souls that He is purifying, and that are purifying themselves for use, not simply for

show, not to demonstrate in the eyes of an always allegiant creation what His grace can do ; not for dumb, silent, though glorious display mainly, but for use. I do not say use in the sense in which the term passes in the market as the equivalent of utility, but use in the highest, broadest sense of the word. They are to be useful within that meaning of the term which makes all right, all beautiful things useful, which makes a flower useful, though no eye but God's should see it—which makes every product of the painter's brush, or the sculptor's chisel useful, though it be shut up in some private dwelling. In the deepest sense, the men that stay on the earth, purified in part, and those that pass up to Heaven, purified wholly, "*are meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*"

It opens up a glorious prospect beyond ; it gives the loftiest inspiration to struggle after purity, that while we are attaining it, and when we have attained it, we shall be meet for the Master's use, and be made to subserve that use. If there be anything discouraging to all true natures, it is the idea of uselessness, of being hung up, a mere weed, on the shores of time or eternity ; condemned to be nothing and do nothing. You may place a true soul in any position, put a true man into any palace, with any sumptuousness of furniture or equipage, with any surroundings of wealth or society, and if you condemn him to be useless, you

condemn him to a gilded woe. We want to subserve some use, fulfil some function. An eternal uselessness would be an eternal hell. A heaven of simple enjoyment without use, could be no heaven. The vessel of honor is to be a vessel of use. The sanctified soul is to be a useful soul, not merely here, but through its whole history. The master has use for all souls, niches for them to occupy, errands for them to run, missions for them to fulfil, and the sanctified soul is meet for use, and prepared for every good work.

In the common vocations of life, it requires the apprenticeship and discipline of years to fit one for a single trade or business of life. Skill in special functions is the result of patience and long pains-taking, and to do one work well tasks all the powers, and takes all the time of any man. Preparation for all good work is no possibility of man on earth. But in this higher realm of spiritual work and use, there seems to be a single antecedent qualification, and that is *purity*. The man that purgeth himself is meet for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work. Purity, if it be self-won, seems to be like a universal genius in the arts. A pure man is prepared for every good work. It comes handy to him. He has a knack for it. He is fitted for all missions, for all work.

I have spoken of the vessels of honor; who they are, and their lofty vocation in the eternal future,



and of the law of their fitness. Alas! there is another side. There are vessels of dishonor, vessels that will be plunged in the fountain of dishonor, dripping and brimming. What are these? How do they become so? The law is sure, irreversible on this side as on the other. Which shall we be?

## XXXI.

### MANY MANSIONS IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

*In my Father's house are many mansions.*—JOHN xiv. 2.

THIS forms a part of the last discourse of Jesus to His disciples before His crucifixion. He had before told them of His speedy departure from earth, and He wished to console them under this announcement. He was to leave them and pass out of their sight, but He was not to go beyond the region of sympathy and fellowship with them. Though absent from earth, and no longer visible to their natural eye, He was yet in their common Father's home. This was a weighty consideration, and eminently adapted to console them, as it is us, under their bereavement. "I shall be no longer with you, but I shall be in our Father's house, not in the same mansion, but in one of the many that compose it." The thought is cheering when we consider the position of Christ with respect to us, and it is also cheering when we consider the position of our pious friends who have gone from

among us. Christ and they alike are in our Father's house.

Two thoughts are prominent in our text. *First*, All parts of the universe are our Father's house; and *Second*, In that Father's house are many mansions.

And, *first*, The entire universe is our Father's house. He inhabits it, is in one part of it as much as in another, though He may not manifest Himself as conspicuously in one part as in another; yet He is in it all as a dweller. We can go nowhere in it, be nowhere in it without Him, and if we are allegiant to Him, without His paternal recognition and regards. We can have Him everywhere in it as a protector, a friend tender and sympathetic. We can call upon Him, and He will answer us and draw nigh to us. He fills immensity, He dwells in it, and may render all sections of it social and homelike. In no part of this vast universe, wandering up and down its vast corridors, journeying out into its far-retreating extremities, need we, shall we be alone; need we feel solitary and forsaken. Wherever we go, on some high errand of duty, on some lofty excursion of investigation or benevolence, we shall be in our Father's house; its imperial walls will encompass us, its roof will shelter us. God our Father will be there, making what would be otherwise solitary, social.

*Second*, In this one house of our Father are many mansions or apartments; how many we know not.

Christ tells us so, and modern science confirms the fact on a grand scale. The telescope reveals a firmament crowded with worlds, all of which are under one all-comprehensive law, all fulfilling their courses, obedient to central authority—all within our Father's domain—all mansions in His house. If occupied by living beings, they are subject to Him, they owe allegiance to Him, they claim and gain protection of Him. If occupied by intelligent beings, however they may differ from us in physical or mental structure, they are yet our brethren, as being children of a common Father. It needs but an acknowledgment of allegiance to Him on the part of any section of intelligent creatures, to bring them within the range of our sympathies and affections. If they and we love Him, we love each other. Common regard for Him, common obedience to Him, bring us into companionship with each other. They and we are in the one house of our Father, though we occupy remote and different apartments. Our remoteness does not make us strangers, nearly as much as our common love to Him, the Head and Master of the house, makes us companions. We may send our winged thought out as far as it can fly, we may penetrate to worlds which no glass reveals, we may conceive of stars so remote that no arithmetic can compute the distance; but if we find minds and hearts there made by the Great mind and heart of God, they are occupants of our

Father's house, the same house that we occupy, and so are our kindred, and our friends, and brothers. We could meet them to-day, here in our restricted and secluded abode; we could meet them in their perhaps broader and grander mansion, or we could meet them on the broad highways of creation; and what there would be in common to us would infinitely outweigh what there would be special and peculiar to us. There would be grounds of comity and amity and fraternity, broader than those of isolation and strangeness.

They and we dwell in one house of our Father. They and we acknowledge one God who is our Father, and so what would unite us is vastly more than what would divide us. We should not fear to meet them. They might be great and we small, they filled with the garnered knowledge of centuries and vast journeyings, and we narrow and restricted in knowledge; they might be overflowing with a seraph's love, and burn and glow with admiration of our Father's character, and we might, as we so often do, cleave to the dust; still, if we acknowledged one God and Father, we should meet on the basis of a blessed brotherhood; should be occupants of one house, whose apartments stretched through infinity. We should say, as we each considered our home, "it is the one house of our Father, and its roof canopies us and our differing apartments."

The idea of our text has food for the intellect. It sends the scientific investigator out into the depths of space in the full assurance that he will find no orphan-world, cast off from the cares and laws of our Maker. He will feel that whatever new star comes within the circuit of his observation, it will come, not as an estray with no cords binding it to its fellows ; but it will come with the confession of a blessed unity, with submission to common laws, a new mansion giving new enlargement to our already expanded views of the greatness of our Father's house. And as it gives new food to the intellect, so does our text give new food and new enlargement to our hearts. "In our Father's house are many mansions." Science tells us that ours is comparatively but a little world, although it is so large. We know, too, that it is in an important sense secluded. We hear no voices, we see no signals from other worlds. We know not their constitution, nor whether they are occupied. We know not whether they are finished or are now in the process of construction. We know not the character of their occupants if any they have. We know very little about them ; but under the statement of our text we know this : that we have a friendly interest in all those worlds, as being in the one house of our Father ; that their occupants, if they do or shall exist, are our brethren ; that we have but to know of their existence, and we are prepared to love them as being

our brethren. So that our text gives a new interest to the investigations of science, confirming what science teaches us, that all worlds are linked together; and also gives new scope to our hearts, immeasurably enlarging the sphere of their sympathies and affections.

This declaration of our Saviour gives us repose and solace, in our contemplations of the vastness of God's universe. I think all minds at times, under the revelations of the telescope, get bewildered and lost in the sense of the vastness of the universe. We roam through it, and its grandeur oppresses us. We seem too little for it. It overmasters us. We cannot bear the vast stretches over which it carries us, and we shrink back, and nestle down in our little world, like a bird after its flights in its quiet nest; sometimes preferring littleness to greatness, a world where we can feel the warm breath of sympathy, to a world that oppresses us by its vastness and strangeness and solitude. Now I shall not forget this element in our nature that clings to the local and the known; but, then, while we love the local and the narrow, *it* is not enough for us. We want a narrow home to settle down in, but then we want a universe to send our thought through, to stretch our minds and hearts upon. Only let us feel that we are not aliens in it and strangers, that we are not stretching beyond our measure when we are roaming in it, that we are not

going out of our Father's house, or out of the reach of our friends and kindred, and then the universe will not oppress us. The Saviour did not feel that He was going into a strange place when He left the world that gave Him birth; and we shall not, whether in imagination we depart from earth, or whether, indeed, our souls take their flight above.

The text also gives us a lofty idea of the munificence of our Father. He has fitted up such a house, with such apartments varied and beautiful, not for Himself but for His children. He dwells in it all, and in each of its many mansions. He has not left one of them without reminders of Himself. He has crowded each with mementoes of His thoughtful kindness. If one were to live for many thousand years in the single narrow room into which he is born, and where he is disciplined for eternity, the grandest mind of the race would not exhaust the themes for study and admiration. The secrets of a single world, its inhabitants will never open. And if one, and that a narrow world, absolutely astounds us at the indications of our Father's resources, His boundless munificence,—what must all the apartments of this vast house open to the gazing and wondering spirits that occupy them! If one world causes us to stop and wonder, if it absolutely confounds us with what it exhibits of our Father's wisdom and generosity, what



shall we say to all that He has spread in such profusion over all His dwellings !

I have said that *we* are in a state of seclusion in our world. We are shut up in it. We have no instruments of locomotion beyond its limits. We have no wings that can fan the upper ether. We can see in the depths of space the other apartments of our Father's house, but we cannot cross the threshold of our own while in life, and go out to make minute discoveries in the abodes that our brethren occupy. This is doubtless well. Our seclusion has wise ends of discipline for the present. We can best subserve present purposes by limitation. But seclusion will not always be the law. Ultimately, doubtless, all the apartments of our Father's house will be open to us. We shall have the liberty of the whole house, and of all its rooms. We shall not always be prisoners, knocking against the walls of our prison-house, if we indeed can call our house a prison, even by the widest stretch of rhetorical language. We shall journey whithersoever subdued, obedient, and loving spirits shall prompt us to go. We shall feel no sense of restriction or confinement. If it will add to our bliss to fathom the secrets, and know our brethren in other worlds—in remote mansions of our Father's house, we shall feel no constraint on our sanctified propensities. There as here, will be those who will love to roam, as there will be those who will love to stay.

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The text affords us strong consolation in the death of our pious friends. They are not unhoused when they pass out of the world. They have not gone to some home of which they and we can know nothing. They are there as they were here, in our Father's house. They in one, we in another apartment. We in one adapted to wise, moral ends, and having blessed disciplinary purposes, but they doubtless in a more glorious apartment—one that shall more perfectly exhibit the goodness and munificence of the one Father—one that shall be better fitted for their advanced and purified spirits, and their more blessed society and engagements. They are not strangers where they are. They have friends to greet them there, more and warmer than they had to greet them here when they first landed upon our earth. They are not lost in the immensity of God's works. They have a home. They have the home feeling. Their bodies we deposited in tears in the grave, as a seed that shall ultimately germinate and grow into the plant of an immortal life. But their spirits have gone up into some one of those many apartments that make up the one house of our Father. Their earthly house is dissolved, but they have still "a building of God, eternal in the heavens."

The text comes with an immensely practical question to each one of us. Is the builder and Master of this vast house in which there are so many mansions

*our* Father? Have we the filial spirit toward Him? Have we returned from our wanderings, and through faith in His Son, been adopted into His family, and constituted His heirs? This one house, with its many mansions—with its glorious apparatus—with its rich furniture, with all there is in it to make wise and blessed, is not for His enemies, not for aliens, it is for His children. If we, without presumption, in the meekest penitence and trust, can call God our Father—then may we call His house ours, its apartments ours, as we shall want them for our enlargement, our comfort, our joy.

## XXXII.

### THE PERFECT SATISFACTION OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

*I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.*—PSALM  
xvii. 15.

THE more immediate idea in this passage seems to be, that whenever the Psalmist awoke from sleep, he felt satisfied or joyful in the favor of God. Worldly men awake to prosecute earthly objects, and to find joy and satisfaction in them. He awoke to find satisfaction in God.

But though this is the more immediate reference, yet the mind by a natural law of association, goes forward to that awaking from the long sleep of death, when those who have sought and obtained the favor of God here, will have joy and satisfaction in that favor forever. We will then, my hearers, use this passage in way of general accommodation to that perfect satisfaction which we shall feel on our final and eternal awaking in the likeness or favor of God.

*Here* we are satisfied measurably, for here we have bright hopes and beatific visions, and even present enjoyments if we are disciples of Jesus, but there

is much to affect our peace and joy. We are saved by hope. The future is our golden era. In the present there is much to mar our joy,—sin, temptation, suffering, bitter partings, sometimes dark forebodings. We lie down to sleep, burdened often, oppressed; we awake to renew the great battle of life. It is not till we sleep our last sleep, and awake with the eternal sunshine of God's favor, that we shall experience perfect satisfaction. When we thus awake in the likeness of God, we shall be satisfied.

We shall be satisfied with ourselves. Here, with any intelligent, well-conceived views of what we are and how we appear in the eyes of all pure and holy intelligences, we cannot be. You occasionally indeed see one so puffed up with vanity and pride, so ignorant of himself, his character and standing, that you justly but reproachfully say, there is one who is well satisfied with himself, and is well content to be what he is. But his baser qualities not his virtues beget this feeling, his ignorance not his knowledge, fosters it. All men who have light enough to see what they are as compared with any elevated standard of judgment, are dissatisfied with themselves. They are justly so. It is no mock modesty that prompts them to say and to feel so. But when they awake in God's likeness, they will have this dissatisfied feeling no longer. They will have no occasion, for what caused dissatisfaction with themselves was sin. Take away

this cause, and the feeling departs with it. Enstamp upon their souls the very image of Christ, and this alone will bring perfect satisfaction. They will demand no lofty position in heaven, no exaltation, no peculiar honors, nothing that shall mark and distinguish them from others to make them satisfied with themselves. Such feelings and desires will have no place there: it will be enough to awake in the perfect likeness of God, to bring the most perfect satisfaction. Their imaginations will satisfy them,—their thoughts, their desires, their motives, their wills, their words, their acts will satisfy them. All that they are within, all that they do without, will satisfy them. There will be none of that unrest, that disaffection with ourselves which we now feel. Alas, how often are we compelled to experience this! How often when the day is over, with its wild, tumultuous voices, and the still, calm night comes when we retire from the world to commune with our own hearts; how often as we cast the eye back on the past, do we find cause for bitter, stinging reflections! The acts that may have seemed externally correct, have perhaps been wrong or imperfect in motive. Sin has mixed with all that we have said or done; if our general aim has been right, how far short have we come of making our life correspondent with it. How does conscience, if it be rectified and sensitive, reprove us for the things for which the world has commended us! Nothing that

we do satisfies us, and it is only as we resort anew to the blood of sprinkling to have our stains washed away and conscience stilled, that we can retire calmly to rest. Now when we awake in God's likeness, we shall have no occasion for any of these feelings. We shall perform no errand of love dissatisfied, feeling that we should have done better. We shall pause at the close of no era in eternity, and glancing back find food for remorse. Conscience as a reprover will be heard no more, its voice will never utter a rebuke. Blessed state when we shall be satisfied *justly* with ourselves.

- We shall be satisfied with our place and our position there. We believe we shall occupy a specific locality, that there will be one spot which the redeemed will call *home*. It will be a local home. We shall not be limited or confined to it any more than we are here. Our mortal home may be a small spot, and yet we have the range of the world; and so heaven may as a locality be relatively to the universe a limited
- sphere, and yet it may be our home. The universe we may range there, as we do the earth here, yet as we are so framed here as to love one spot which we may call home, so there amid all our wide journeyings in the vast empire of God, discerning and appreciating its wonders, we may be so constituted as to desire a specific spot which we may call home.

We believe there is but one Being who is not local; but one Being who inhabits the whole of eter-

nity and all the universe. All finite creatures are local, and, I believe, demand a centre. The redeemed want a centre—a *home* just as we do. They want a trysting place to which they can return from their journeyings—a place to which they can look from far with the mind's eye, and which shall exert the same influence upon them there that home does here. We should find little pleasure in being turned out into this great creation of God to travel as we might list. We might journey forever on our path and never meet an old acquaintance. We want to feel that we shall all gravitate to one spot, and we doubtless shall. The Bible is full of representations of a local heaven, and is thus in correspondence with the demands of our nature. And when we reach and awake in it, we shall be satisfied to dwell there and make it our home, and be content with our position. Be it what it may, we shall be satisfied with it, and in this shall be unlike ourselves here, where we often are in a position that displeases us, perhaps properly, and perhaps improperly. Certain it is that our satisfaction in this respect there will not arise from any distinction we may reach.

There is a vast deal of meaning in that passage of Scripture that affirms that God shall be "All and in all." Here man is much—great men are much, and are much talked of, but there man will sink, and God will be all. And wherever we may



be, whatever post we may occupy, we shall be satisfied with it.

We shall be satisfied with our companions, and for the same reasons that we shall be satisfied with ourselves,—because they will be in God's likeness. We often become dissatisfied with companions here. Indeed, there is but one relation in which constant intercourse is not likely to breed disaffection. Constantly with those to whom we are not bound by the strongest of all ties, we discern so many points of divergence, so many faults, that we are likely to find the proverb true that "Familiarity begets contempt."

Most people are not good enough to live with themselves always, and indeed, if it were not for the privilege of parting with ourselves every night in our slumbers, and meeting again to say good morning on the morrow, I think we should be absolutely worn out with our own presence. Now if with all our self-love we do become weary of ourselves, it is hardly to be accounted strange if we should become weary of each other. Narrowness, faults, outjutting diversities beget dissatisfaction, but when we awake in God's likeness and mingle together in heaven, we shall not need walls to part us as we do here. We shall be good enough to live in one home, and that forever. The theatre of heaven will be as broad as the universe. There will be a great telegraphic centre from which shall start, and to which shall return all those mes-

sages which will give zest to the converse of heaven. Old themes will be ever receiving new interest from the addition of new, and the old will be ever establishing new and beautiful connections with the new, so that there will be fresh food for meditation and communication. There will be ever presenting themselves new aspects of the character and works of God. Every moment will exhibit new features of excellence and glory. Thus the dwellers in heaven, so good, so earnest to know more of God, so unselfish, so mature, so knowing, will be ever satisfied with each other.

We shall be satisfied with our employments. Regarded specifically, we do not know what they will be. We shall doubtless be employed, constantly, usefully, to the full capacity of our powers. Christ tells us as the master did his steward, "Occupy till I come;" and when He shall have come, His command will still be "Occupy." Talent will be differently employed, but probably still more usefully than it is here. We can be useful here in certain ways perhaps in which we shall not be there, but usefully occupied we doubtless shall be. If we could eliminate from our ideas of labor all that fatigues and exhausts, it might be safe to say that there will be labor there. There will be intense though not constant application to the great themes of eternity, and the problems of God's government.

With all our employments we shall be satisfied.

Here it is not and cannot be so. We may indeed be satisfied with them in the sense of submitting to them—being resigned to them—taking them for what they were designed, as trials of our patience, as disciplines of our powers; but not satisfied with them in the sense of delighting in them for their own sake. Few would be content to spend an eternity in plying the sledge to a drill on yonder ledge, or in doing the work which a steam-engine and trip-hammer could do more effectively than a man with a soul in him. We can be content to do these things temporarily, and for ulterior ends, but not eternally and for their own sake. There are a great many things that have to be done in this world that nought but stern hunger or still sterner duty would induce a being with a heart and brains in him to do. We do them from a sense of duty, not because we deem it a privilege. But when we awake in God's likeness, all our employments will be sought and engaged in for their own sake. They will be more and better to us than the play of the child, for they will be the play of full-grown men, and will give us the most delightful satisfaction. We shall seek and engage in them with alacrity and untiringly.

We shall be satisfied with all the arrangements and decisions of God. We should be so here, and we are so in so far as faith prevails. But there we shall be satisfied more intelligently, if I may so speak. The

Apostle in reference to this point says, that "We shall know even as we are known." The mystery of the Divine government, so far as it is concerned with this world at least, is to be measurably cleared up. Now we *believe* all is right—then we shall *know* that all is right. Now we are satisfied without knowing—in the dark. Then we shall be satisfied in knowing, or in the light. Here we stand under the cloud and say, "He doeth all things well." There we shall stand amid the full splendors of the sun and say, "All is well."

We do not mean to say that God will ever bring all His plans and decisions within the limits of our knowledge. Far from it. There will always be scope for faith. And yet with reference to a vast number of the appointments and doings of God, we shall be enabled to say that we are satisfied, not because we believe, but because we know. We shall emerge from the darkness into the light. With all the decrees of God we shall be satisfied.

We shall be satisfied with our prospects. Here our outlook is often dark. Eternity looks gloomy—we shrink back from its bosom. It seems to us a dark profound into which no light shines. It, and what is in it, we dread, and look away from it back into what seems comparatively a warm, sunny world. We are aware that this avails not, that we are borne on to it just as fast when we shrink as when we hasten—still

we shrink. Sometimes we get the better of our dread. Sometimes only this little spot looks dark, and the light shines yonder. We fear the present more than the future, time more than eternity; but it is not always, perhaps not generally so. We fear what is before us, and it is right that we should do so, for the terrible and final judgment is before us. That day is to come in which our destinies for immortality will be decided. And he that has no fear of the judgment, is either better or worse than most men, than most disciples. But then all solitudes as to our locality and destiny will have ended. We shall be satisfied with the present, but still more so with our future. There will be the prospect stretching away infinitely, growing brighter and brighter till the burnished eye can look no farther.

*When we awake in God's likeness*,—friends! what are your prospects of awaking in the likeness of God? We shall all sleep in death, and we shall all awake and come forth. To some it will be an awaking to shame and everlasting contempt; no satisfaction, but an unrest, deepening, growing forever. Others will awake to glory, in the likeness of God, and they will be satisfied forever.

### XXXIII.

#### THE ETERNITY OF THE AFFECTIONS.

*Your heart shall live forever.*—PSALM xxii. 26.

IF unaided reason were called to answer the challenge, "O Death, where is thy sting?"—it would only have to point us to the myriad deathbeds of earth and say, *It is there*; or if called to answer that added challenge, "O Grave, where is thy victory?"—it would only have to take us to the vast, teeming sepulchres of the dead, and say, *It is there*. Death has been ever planting its stings, and the grave has been ever proclaiming its victories.

Wherever culture has made sensitive the delicate susceptibilities of our nature, there loving hands have closed the dying eyes of the loving. As we come up nearer to the true ideal of humanity, as we give greater depth and scope to our noblest powers, as we imbed ourselves sweetly and tenderly down among living and true souls, and become interlinked here and there with the best of our race, directing all our

culture in life to finer issues, we become more susceptible to the sorrows of separation, and more stricken as we part with those we love.

Death makes sad havoc in these homes of ours—these sanctuaries to which we flee for refuge in the stern battles of life. In the places where God and nature commission us to garner our dearest treasures, there we are most deeply wounded. And to these agonizing Sunderings of strong bonds, we would summon no stoical indifference. We would remember that the grief we suffer is the measure of our love, and we would commit no suicide upon our true life for the exemption it would give us from pain. In living souls there must be agony when the cords are severed that bind souls together. It is the dead only whom we can wound without pain. Better far train our natures to their highest capacities,—open our souls to all the griefs that come to us in hours of separation—bow in tears over the coffins and the graves of our precious dead,—perceive truly all the wreck that death hath wrought; and then as we look upon the still, calm face of the sleeper, comfort and elevate ourselves with the thought, “Your heart shall live forever.”

It is fitting to think and to speak of the immortal life, the eternity of the affections. I need not say that all things in the kingdoms of nature and of grace are for those and those only who receive them. The warm

sunshine, all the beautiful sights of heaven and earth, all the sweet sounds that fill the air, are for those who have senses to perceive and minds to appreciate them. And in the higher domain of grace, all the precious promises are made to those who seek and prize them. It is said of the good, of those whose spirits have been quickened and permeated by the Divine Spirit, that their hearts shall live forever in the true and lasting home of all noble and allegiant souls.

The heart is the treasure-house of the soul, where are gathered its most precious jewels. Pluck out the heart from the man, and you rend away that which gives him his highest value in the eyes of all intelligent creatures. Scan the history of the race—unroll the records of the generations that have been, and that which gives to them their highest interest, is the hearts that have lived, joying and weeping, hoping and fearing, loving and hating. Suppose generations to have existed without hearts, and we would almost as soon delve in the tombs that contain their ashes, as in the scrolls that bring them to our memories.

As with the men, so with the literature of the past,—it is awakening, refreshing, appealing, only as it is of and from the heart. The heart of man in its essential traits is ever the same in all times and in all countries; and the books only that portray the heart in its varied and complex workings, can be of perennial interest.



And as with the books, so with the work of men. The heart that has been put into it, alone redeems it from drudgery, elevating and dignifying it. Nothing that has been done by the myriads who have died and left no sign, has been wholly ignoble, that has been done from the heart and to gratify its purer affections.

The humble many who have worked in the unnoticed tasks of life, and whom history no more names than it does the insects that built the coral reefs of the Pacific Seas, have yet shown the higher types of life as they have wrought, not in the spirit of slaves or of petty rivalry or for pelf, but to furnish the scanty meals of those they loved. And to-day, all over the world, the work that goes on in the workshop, on the farm, on the sea, in far-off retreats, on the mountain slopes and in the valleys, is ennobled and joined with the work of the immortals as it is wrought with the heart. Lubricate toil with the affections, and it cannot be mean. The toiler who leaves his humble hut in the morning, to labor in the summer sun till the evening shadows call him home, and all from the promptings of his tenderest feelings, is one of God's noblemen.

And in the sweeping wars that have rolled over the centuries like a blast from the desert, in the battles under whose dun mantle thousands have fallen stark and stiff, or bit the dust in agony, the one single element of enduring interest that has mingled in them

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and redeemed them as a whole from the charge of inhuman butchery, has been the heart in them bent on protecting kindred and country from rapine and slaughter. Look out upon the dwellings that dot the landscape, go through the crowded streets of the city, and it is pre-eminently the *heart* that is in all these homes that makes them sweet and attractive.

The joys of the world and its sorrows,—the smiles at meeting, the tears at parting, the gladness at births, the agonies at deaths,—all are of the heart. From the heart go out the threads by which, in the silent loom of time, the race is woven into one continuous fabric. The heart links worlds together, heaven and earth, with stronger bonds than the mighty power of gravitation. Wherever hearts throb, thither hearts turn. Speak of homes over the sea where grief broods, want cowers, ignorance sits in shadows, guilt trembles, sin festers, and fear points to an awful hereafter, and thither, as though called by the voice of God, truthful, loving, compassionate hearts are drawn. It is the heart of God that turns Him with tenderest pity, with Almighty help to our lost world. He gives His heart to the world, and He asks but the world's poor heart in return.

The heart of the world beats heavily at the portal of a thousand new-made graves to-day, and in a thousand stricken households. And over the dying beds of those we love, over the forms that lie clad for their

last retreats, over the graves that we plant with flowers and other and more enduring memorials of our affection, there is no question that we ask with half the earnestness—none that we send out into the world whither the loved have gone, with half the interest as this,—“Do they love there yet?” And there is no response so consoling as this, “Their *heart* shall live forever.” Once let the heart be quickened with a true life, come into connections with the Fountain of Life, feel its dry channels moistened and filled from the upper and abiding springs, and then though the body die, though all that we saw and touched shall fade away, yet the heart—invisible like all spiritual essences, viewless as God Himself,—the heart manifesting itself in the eye, trembling in the voice, prompting to all cheerful aids, and yet never seen by the bodily eye,—*it* shall live forever.

When we say that the *heart* thus living in the true Fountain of Life, Jesus Christ, whose exhaustless resources can never fail, shall live forever, we do not of course mean that it shall go out into the invisible world unattended, unencompassed, unwinged with thought, imagination, fancy,—unguided, unimpelled by will, widowed and solitary. Rather shall it go with these as its blessed retainers and pursuivants, with these as the trailing garments of its glory, with these as servants to attend it and do its behests. The heart as the central power of the soul—as giving

it its true character, assigning it its true honor, shall peculiarly and emphatically live.

Yes, the affections shall live forever. None of them shall be lost in their transit to the other and better world,—none of them shall be left behind, none buried in the dark sea of oblivion, but all shall be carried safely through. I know it is a conception of some, even highly spiritual persons, that we are to drop in the passage to heaven our natural affections,—that in the home of pure souls, in the society of the congenial and sanctified brotherhood of Jesus, where all will be linked in sweet affinities with all, there will be no scope for the simply natural affections,—that these are for a time,—the calyx of the flower that may fall away when it has bloomed out in immortal fragrance and beauty in heaven. These, it may be said, give grace and attractiveness to earth, give quiet nooks and shelter, within which spirits may be protected while they are in training for heaven, but will be absorbed in a higher beauty there. I will not say that there will be no penetrating with Diviner affections, no tempering, no modification of these lower ones. There doubtless will be. On that Mount of Glory they will be transfigured. But then the soul will not be dwarfed to reach its perfections. It need not suffer any elimination of the elements that gave it its highest attractiveness here in order that it may enter a higher society there. The personal affec-

tions need not yield to the universal. If our noblest idea of heaven is that of a blessed family with the great Jehovah as the Father, shall we, must we, when there, eradicate the very affections that gave us our sweetest conceptions here of heaven? Must earth be all forgotten, that heaven may be sweet? Must the play of earthly feelings and attachments all be swept away, that the ecstasy of present joys may be perfect? Must there be no tenderer, special love for the mother and the father into whose eyes we looked in infancy, and whose first training glance was heavenward, and whose first word perhaps was of that other Father who folds all in His heart and covers all with His shield? Shall brothers and sisters with whom we talked in childhood, and of whom we learned in part what love meant,—shall these be to us as those who come up to the one home from foreign shores—dear, indeed, and yet strangers? It may not, cannot be. I would believe anything rather than that.

The heart—the whole heart shall live forever;—not a thread in its braided glory, not a tint in its blessed radiance will be gone. Special remembrances, special affections, soft clingings to those who gave us being and shared with us the same hearts and homes, will not be at all incompatible with the attachments that we shall give and love to give to those who have come up from all lands and all times—the elder and the later dwellers of earth, who have washed their

robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It would be unfilial even in heaven not to love with a special love those who gave us birth. The soul drops none of its primal elements in that better clime. We shall love there those whom we love here. The heart,—yea, *all of it*, shall live forever.

I have said that the affections—those that are special, those that are general and universal, those that fasten upon God, and those that cling to kindred and friends, shall all live;—I also say that they will live, as we now can but poorly appreciate or conceive.

*All* life is but weak and feeble here. It is so soon met and overtaken by death—it is so perpetually under its shadow and so darkened thereby, that we gain but faint notions of it at best. It grows only as it can grow here in continual conflict with death, and is soon o’ermastered by it and falls crushed beneath its tread.

And the heart’s truest life, the life it has from God and in common with Him, scarcely gets started in the wintry atmosphere of this world. It merely gives us hints in the larger and better spirits of earth, of what it is and may become. God puts great hearts before us now and then simply as prophecies of the heart’s possibilities. In the hereafter, the affections will give an idea of life such as we can now only dimly conceive of. They will have nothing to hinder their development in that realm of life, but everything

to advance it. Here, their life is like the animal and vegetable growth of the Polar regions, dwarfed and restrained by wintry winds and biting frosts. They meet with checks and hindrances to their development manward and Godward,—in absorption in the world's business—in the multiplicity of its cares—in the weariness of the body, rendering torpid the susceptibilities of the soul—in the isolations, the coldness, the discords of life—in the rareness of noble examples showing what hearts may be—in the dimness, the contradictions, the divisions, the sectarianisms of earth—in the faint apprehensions of God, of Christ, of eternity ;—in all these we find sad clogs to the growth of the heart's higher life.

But in heaven, all these will be gone. *There* will be found all that can give elevation, expansion, depth, power to the affections, clearness of insight into spiritual realities, the overshadowing presence and inflowing glories of God, the purest society of congenial spirits, all whose ways and all whose attractions will be on high, noble examples of the affections in lovely embodiment, sweet amenities, open souls all about us with prompt hospitalities and fellowship ;—everything to inspire us to flow out in confidence and love,—no repressions or repulsions, all inviting to perpetual out-gushings of heart,—God the Father over us and all good souls about us. These will be the incitements, the nourishment of our affections ; and in this Divine

atmosphere, with this warm sunshine resting on them, playing around them and penetrating to their very roots and spring, they, like tropical plants, will have a growth, exhibit a luxuriance, effloresce in a beauty now inconceivable to us. The heart that has ever been really quickened to a Divine life, that has ever been put beside the beating heart of God and felt its Divine pulsations however faintly, such a heart shall live forever.

I have said that it is the heart that gives to life its true value. A world, a nation, a city, a community, a home without hearts is dead—with them it is alive. And what we have to contend with, in visitations of death in our homes, is a yielding to appearances rather than to facts. Death as it *seems*, is a terrible thing. The body that gave to us the manifestations of the soul—its visible signals, is still and motionless. The old methods of telegraphing thought and affection are lost. The heart is still, the hands folded, the eyes closed, the cheek pallid;—there is no sign, no motion. Sense tells us the soul is gone—the man is dead—the affections have ceased to be. But no! Faith looks through appearances to realities, to the soul itself, rather than to its accustomed manifestations. It says, the heart lives on and on;—the thoughts, the affections are not dead, but live and shall live forever. We see not the old signals—we shall see them no more; but the great fact survives—our veritable















